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THE
BELGRAVIA
ANNUAL

BY
M.E.BRADDON

1875

WARWICK HOUSE, PATERNOSTER ROW

Stories from Belgravia Annuals, Part 1 Christmas (1867-1875)

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The Water-Spirit by Walter Thornbury (poem) - 1867
The Confession of Zillah the Witch by Francis Derrick - 1868
The Bad Lord Brackenbury by George Augustus Sala - 1868
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NICODEMUS

BY ALFRED CROWQUILL



THE APPARITION.

My uncle the vicar was a facetious man, with a good heart and a good cellar, who, when I first made his acquaintance, had two chins, which in course of time developed into three; but I must say, in justice to him, that he did not forget to fatten his parishioners at the same time, for no deserving person

asked of him in vain, and his cook made the poor people soup of a charming consistency; so that, take him for all in all, my uncle was a very good vicar, and never bothered his simple flock with his college metaphysics. As I have written, my uncle was a facetious man, and loved to have a sly thrust at his prede-

cessors the monks, whose fish-preserves were at the bottom of his garden—though not tenanted as formerly, but in the quiet possession of his choice brood of ducks ; and the once noble abbey had resolved itself into a few cart-loads of rubble and limestone, glimmering through the trees like a ghost that cannot leave the spot of its ancient glories or troubles. Beneath this ruin my uncle, with a few old chums and us youngsters, would calmly smoke his pipe, and sound the depths of a magnum of his double-diamond port, in the cool of the evening. The spot always seemed to inspire him with a story-telling faculty, and the legends, more or less connected with late inhabitants of the locality, tinged with the mild sarcasm of his character, would run on, much to the delight of his audience. Upon one of these occasions he told us the following veracious legend of a Father Nicodemus, not remembered by the oldest inhabitant.

THE LEGACY.

Father Nicodemus—an unromising name for such a saint-like character—was celebrated for the strength of his lungs : the choir, in fact, would have been weak without his *basso profundo*. He was equally effective in the refectory, where his stomach evinced a profound depth that was quite as astonishing. His power of drinking was never correctly ascertained, as such indulgence was not permitted within the sacred walls ; but, if you might judge by his nose, his out-door amusements could not have been quite so innocent. But this, perhaps, was only scandal, as anyone great in any way is sure to be pelted with the mud of the envious and grovelling ; so I feel inclined not to dilate upon the colour of his nose, of which there was not the slightest sign in the statue erected to his memory.

Father Nicodemus did a great deal of out-door work. He was a kind of ecclesiastical whipper-in, and kept the idle and shirking up to their duties. He was particularly attentive to the old and the feeble who were without heirs. He always found excuses for their not attending chapel, when they paid someone else qualified to do all that was necessary for them ; and even went so far as to see after the final disposition of their property, he always appointing himself the executor and curator ; so that he was the cause of many beautiful decorations in the chapel of his abbey, much to the admiration of the abbot and the fraternity, and also to the future benefit of the departed—*whose heirs were never found*.

One old lady, who was the relict of a long-ago-departed miller of the Abbey Mills, knowing her husband's miller-like faculty of taking toll, most piously returned it tenfold through Father Nicodemus, who, good man, *never mentioned it to anyone* ; and thereby the miller escaped much scandal.

With this old lady, then, Father Nicodemus was an especial favourite, and the best of everything was saved for the happy occasions of his visits, which could not be too often ; for if he received comfort, he brought comfort with him, and never departed empty-handed, for he always had a saint or two under expensive repair, and drew the old lady's purse-strings accordingly. Now this old lady, although she pooh-poohed the little peccadilloes of her late husband in the matter of toll, enjoyed without a twinge of remorse the ample proceeds thereof ; and the mill being let to another, the temptation had departed with the tenancy, and she walked as uprightly as her age would allow her.

Father Nicodemus knew that she had what was facetiously called “a stocking” put by in some safe cor-

ner. Why a stocking, I have never been able to discover by the most unremitting antiquarian research; at all events the old lady was her own banker, and Father Nicodemus was her principal accountant and dispenser.

Gently and delicately did he handle the stocking, looking upon its contents as really his own, the possession being only delayed by the old woman's obstinate tenacity to life. At last she became so feeble that he looked upon her flickering lamp as at the last flash; and one eventful evening it flashed up indeed, to his astonishment, for the old lady, with a bright light in her eyes and power in her voice, gave him her last instructions clearly and distinctly, without hesitation or reservation, thus:

That all her property in money and otherwise should be given, after her decease and decent burial, to her husband's poor relations and a far-away niece of her own, equally divided, as he would find it written on the fly-leaf of an old account-book; reserving, as in duty bound, a certain sum, also therein specified, for the benefit of the prayers of the whole fraternity of the abbey, with all their power ecclesiastical.

Father Nicodemus, with a mental reservation, swore to perform all this; and the next morning at day-break found him rummaging the old woman's eccentric hiding-places, and filling the pouch which hung under his cassock. He smiled as he patted the treasure, which materially interfered with his outline, and eventually interfered with his peace of mind and comfort. Thus it fell out:

The old lady being quietly disposed of, it struck Father Nicodemus that he might get permission to make a pilgrimage to some saint whose name has long been forgotten; thereby giving himself a better opportunity of enjoying the ill-gotten

treasure, and escaping the whispers of the foolish and profane that were rife about the supposed rich old woman dying so poor, not even leaving a legacy to the church of her adoption to pass through the hands of her old chum Nicodemus. But as he never complained, what right had they? He shook his head, and said nothing; but being granted leave, the *basso profundo* departed on his way rejoicing.

But the old woman's spirit did not rest. She resisted the unfair advantage taken of her by her old ecclesiastical crony, and as they said in those days of superstition, "could not rest in her grave;" and she didn't.

Father Nicodemus had proceeded some miles on his way, strengthened by the good wine that hung at his girdle, once the private property of his dear old departed friend, when he found himself towards evening in the depths of a thick wood. Sombre and melancholy as such places are in the twilight, a slight moaning wind tended very much to increase the dreariness of this. He hurried on, but the night overtook him in the very midst; so that, like a blind man, he had to feel his way with his staff. The thick undergrowth twined round his legs, and precipitated him amidst the briars, and knocked his naked shins against the gnarled roots. He did not swear, but his deep bass voice growled forth his discontent in no very amiable manner—which, perhaps, after all, was his way of blessing himself.

In the midst of his misery, just as he had picked himself up after an unpleasant fall, a light, intensely bright, suddenly burst through the darkness. "The moon," said he, congratulating himself a little too soon. It was—what was it?

It was an unmistakable apparition of a suit of clothes, long worn by the deceased miller's wife. There

stood her crutch-stick, but no hand leant upon it for support; there was her shoe, but no foot in it; there was her well-worn old velvet hood, but not—hold! was it her face? No, it was not that, but a resplendent light with a frightful—but I do not think it was ever clearly ascertained what he saw. Suffice it to say, that it was something very unpleasant, which made him tremble like a large blanc-mange. “His flesh crawled,” and his marrow became like ice, when a voice sepulchrally solemn addressed him in the following unlady-like manner:

“ You foresworn rascal! return the money that you have in your scrip, or I will never leave you, but throw a light phosphoric upon your path wherever you go; and I know now that your actions will not always bear the light. So refund, robber, before I strip you of your sanctimonious character, and leave you exposed to the sneers of the world, and expelled from the community you disgrace!”

As the—whatever it was—finished speaking, it faded from the old sinner’s horror-stricken sight.

Father Nicodemus wouldn’t believe it, yet his heart beat and the trembling had not left him. He sang no more, but hurried on until he tore his cassock and scratched his face most wofully. At last he gained a clearer path, and came in sight of a hostelry. He made towards it without the slightest hesitation, although it might be thought by straitlaced people that it was not exactly the place for a holy father; but his fear made him oblivious of trifles. But just as he sneaked into the porch a bright light was shed upon him, that made him as distinctly seen as at noonday. He turned and saw the horrid hood and phantom-beams. He uttered a groan and rushed in for companionship; and the ribald riot of the motley crew in possession was not hushed

at his appearance, which was none of the most favourable.

When he issued from the hostelry again—it was deep in the night—there was an uncertainty in his gait that spoke of pottles deep. He felt his condition, and congratulated himself upon the favourable cover of the darkness; but whenever he approached a village the persevering hood appeared and lighted his path, much to his annoyance and the amusement of the villagers, who jumped out of their beds to see the cause of it, and beheld the worthy Father Nicodemus taking both sides of the way, for the simple reason that one of his legs would not stand by the other, the melancholy consequence of which was that he was brought to a standstill in the midst of a slough just deep enough to engulf him to his armpits. Here he lustily roared, whilst the hood shed its illumination round the spot, that the people, hurrying to the rescue, might see the convivial priest like a toad in a hole.

At the first blush of morning—which blushed more than usual as the dirty and draggled priest left the roof that had sheltered him for the night—poor Nicodemus turned his steps homeward, in hopes that the sanctity of its roof would defend him against the visitations of the horrid spectre, and that, with all his tools about him, he might be able to exorcise the troublesome spirit into the very depths of the Red Sea.

So, cheering up his drooping spirits, he proceeded homeward with the intention of reaching the abbey about nightfall, when he might gain his cell and a clean dress without being observed by the brotherhood, as he knew a very convenient corner whereby he might scale the wall, and which he had often used to elude the vigilance of watchers when he had been out beyond canonical hours.

Footsore, chagrined, and terrified, he dragged his body along, which had never undergone such a penance before; for truly his flesh had been mortified in all his mishaps and misadventures.

He smiled to himself as he thought how he should circumvent his ghostly tormentor when he got within the protection of the holy walls. This thought caused him to step out boldly, and reach the outward boundary of the abbey-grounds as the twilight darkened into night. He soon found the dilapidated buttress, the inequalities of which gave him a sure foothold, and had often answered his purpose on a less pressing occasion.

Unfortunately for him, the abbot that night was rather dyspeptic, therefore was indulging himself with a cool walk in the grounds, and heard the sound of some falling stones caused by the ascent of Nicodemus. He stood still and listened; during which pause the unfortunate climber had reached the summit of the wall, and was just preparing to descend when the spectre appeared upon the ground, and threw the full power of its light upon the descending figure. The abbot, startled by the sight of Nicodemus, whom he recognised, as well as by the supernatural light, rang the alarm-bell, which soon brought to his aid a pious, brawny throng, who quickly laid hands on the suspected culprit.

He was dragged before the authorities of the convent; but his rapid ideality stood his friend, and he made up so pretty a drama of the miracle kind as established him ever after as a particularly favoured individual; all of which was emblazoned in missals in the artistic department, and Nicodemus became glorified.

This was all very well, but the old woman was not to be cheated; for wherever he did not wish to be

seen, the light would discover him, until his life became one scene of terror and apprehension. So at last he made an appointment with the ghost in his cell, where he took nothing but holy water, for he wouldn't give a chance away.

True to its appointment, the ghost, with its light a little turned down, made its appearance. Bowing politely to Nicodemus, it stood waiting patiently to hear his proposal. Refusing to take a chair, the clothes hung themselves on a peg usually appropriated to wet umbrellas, and, as he presumed, listened.

"Now, my good old friend," said Nicodemus, beginning with a friendly and confidential style, although, to tell the truth, his teeth chattered, "it pains me to see you in that uncomfortable position. I wish I could persuade you to take a chair, so that you might discuss this matter more at your ease."

"Nonsense," said the spirit, "it's only my clothes."

"Ah, well, as you like," continued he; "but now to business. Could not we come to some amicable arrangement? Can you not allow me to pay a dividend, and be quit of you? Come, don't be hard."

The hood slightly quivered, and said in a sharp decisive tone, "I'll see you hanged first."

"Then I'll drown you in holy water," cried he, starting up, with his ruby gills much redder than usual.

"Pooh!" said the hood; "water can't put out spirits."

"You're an obstinate old fool," said he; "and pray tell me, if I hold tight, what power have you to get it?"

"How, knave?—since you are not choice in your epithets, I'll tell you how. In the next grave to me lies a chatty old lawyer. I have stated my case to him, and his advice is, throw it *into Chancery*, and then the fiend himself can't get it."

"Into where?" screamed Nicholas aghast.

"Chancery!" said the hood.
Nicholas pulled his portmonnaie

from under his robe and threw it on the table; the apparition pocketed it and vanished; and he gave up the ghost with great satisfaction.



End of Nicodemus.



Thomas Gray, del.

W. L. Thomas, sc.

THE RIVER SPIRIT.

THE WATER-SPIRIT

BY WALTER THORNBURY

THE elves had lit their glowworm
lamps
Among the half-shut flowers ;
The sun had set, a globe of fire,
Behind the fortress towers ;
The night-owl, poised on silent
wings,
Moved down the lines of corn ;
The lark was sleeping by its nest,
And dreaming of the morn.

The elves were riding on the bats
In airy tournament,
Above the helmet of the knight,
Who down the valley went,
Careless of the enchanted place,
Through moonlight and through
shade :
Pale on his face the cold light fell,
As he spurr'd down the glade.

Upon his shoulder sloped his lance,
His sword was on his thigh ;
He caroll'd gaily as he rode
The murderer's gibbet by.
The moonlight silver'd helm and
belt,
Spear, plume, and spur, and
sword ;
The tide with molten silver ran,
As he splash'd through the ford.

He passed through forest avenues,
Where many a red deer slept ;
He never turn'd to right or left,
But onward still he kept.
The wild-fire flicker'd o'er the fen,
To lead the knight astray ;
But still with prayer to Mary Queen,
He held upon his way.

Till suddenly across his path
The moonbeams seem'd to move,
And gather into female shape
That whisper'd words of love.
White were her robes, wan was her
face,
What siren songs she sung !

She wept, she laugh'd, she sigh'd,
she smiled,
And to the oak-tree clung.
Yet never a word of mortal speech
The phantom lady spoke,
But sat and rock'd and wrung her
hands
Beneath the moonlit oak.
She pointed where the torrent shed
Its silver o'er the ledge,
Gliding between the fir-tree stems
Over the steep cliff's edge.

Her spell was on him ; for he
toss'd
Away his useless spear,—
His helm, his corselet, and his
sword,
Dismounted without fear ;
Let horse run wild, and scaled the
rock,
Careless of life and limb,
As still the white hand from above
Waved luringly to him.

Cling to the fir-boughs where they
droop
Above the inky linn ;
Snatch at the hare-bell where it
hangs,
Though it be frail and thin ;
Grasp at the fern-leaf on the brink,
Where waves the half-dead grass.
The lightning gleams in the ravine,
And shows the dangerous pass.

Too late ! The doom'd man heeds
them not ;
The earth yields to his foot,
The fir-branch snaps, the fern-leaf
breaks,
The bush rends stem and root.
A goblin laugh rings down the dell,
The waves close o'er his head :
The water-spirit sits and mourns
Another victim dead.

THE CONFESSION OF ZILLAH THE WITCH

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MILDRED'S WEDDING," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

I AM a painter's daughter; and although my father was of Zurich, I am, on my mother's side, of English blood. But I have small memory of this mother, for she died when I was a child; yet here in my doleful prison her face hath come to me in a dream often, and I have seen her smile, and heard whispered words of comfort which I will not set down lest they too be called witchcraft.

My father loved only his art. If he cared for me, it was but fitfully, and because my face served him as a model. My hands, too, he loved to paint, they being wondrous small, and shaped slenderly. My hair also was exceeding beautiful; it reached nearly to my feet in rich waves of brown. I have heard that many women afflicted as I am have nevertheless this jewel on their head—a crown of glorious hair. Yes, I am

afflicted in body; I have ever been sickly, and my form is slight and thin,—not straight, some say; and my left foot barely touches the ground. Yet my face hath power and beauty,—yea, and sweetness too, though I be a witch. And it often served my father in his pictures for many a saint and martyr.

I confess that he also made me sit to him at times for a sibyl, or a sorceress, or a nun condemned to die for broken vows; and once I sat for a Saxon queen undergoing the ordeal of the red-hot ploughshares. He changed my hair then to golden; and on my strange sad face, my dark eyes, and ebony brows, he threw the light of the torturing fire.

Ah, God, as it will be to-morrow when I die!

But I dare not think of this, for my heart grows cold with fear, my

hands tremble, and my poor pen drops powerless.

These sittings to my father the painter were very sad to me, for he never spoke, save to bid me change my attitude, or bring upon my face the expression he desired. I could do this at will. I had but to think of joy or sorrow, of hate or love, and swift upon my face there flashed the semblance of these passions. As I sat silent, having neither book nor work, I used to dream. I dreamed of the banished queens, the martyrs, and the lonely saints in deserts, whom my father loved to paint. Often it was at his command I dreamed thus.

"Zillah," he would say, "I paint a queen falsely accused, brought before a gaping multitude to die. Think, child, of her agony, her indignation at man's injustice, and her piteous prayers to God."

Then as he spoke the queen's soul came into my soul, and all her anguish rushed upon me; her mingled shame and courage, her faith and fear, the hope of her spirit, and the shrinking of her flesh. And on my face there flushed and paled and quivered these terrors, and my father's pencil seized and fixed them on the canvas.

Ah! for his art's sake he should not have lost his child. For the visions which he bade arise would not cease when he flung down the pencil. No; they grew on me; and upon my face—forced so oft to expressions beyond my youth, and alien to the times—there grew a something unnatural and weird; so at night, when I looked upon myself in my mirror, I felt afraid, and I covered my wild eyes with my hands.

There was a maiden lived near us, whose supple form is to be seen in many a picture of my father's, joined to my sad face. She was noble by birth; but her father, an English exile driven from his own land by wars and treason, died at Zurich

so poor, that scarce was there money found to chant a mass for him at his burial. Yet his child was gently nurtured, and lacked nothing of this world's joys; for a rich goldsmith and his wife, having no children, took her, and loved her as their own.

She was no friend of mine; but her lover was my father's pupil, and so she was glad to come to his studio, where she could babble love-talk as he worked. She was not beautiful; her eyes were a cold blue, and though her skin was fair, there was no light upon her face. And she loved all the baubles of this world more than any foolish woman whose poor, small, weak heart it hath been my fate to read. She did not love me,—but that was nothing strange: no one loved me,—and she was, I think, jealous of me.

Jealous! and Ambrose scarce ever spoke to me. That was her lover's name; hers was Beatrice Damer. I did not know her till Ambrose brought her to our house; him I had known all my life long, for his father and mine were cousins and brother-painters.

I wish I could tell my story in quicker, sharper words. As I write, it seems to me that these cold sentences cannot make you understand my misery—cannot bring to your veins the fire of my pain—cannot force you to breathe the chill atmosphere that surrounded me. Always to see his indifference, to bear her dislike, to suffer my father's silent carelessness—this was my life for weeks, months, years.

Ah, I could not help my love! It came to me when I was a child, and as a woman I could not fling it away. As well try to pluck the life from my veins as tear out of my heart this woful love. He did not heed it; no thought of my pain ever ruffled his careless nature; Beatrice had all his thoughts, all his love.

Scarcely did his glance ever fall on me, unless I sat that day, and then it rested on my pallid face as it might on a face of stone.

No maiden in Zurich was so solitary as I. Being sickly and silent, I could not make friends, and I felt I must not dare to ask for sympathy. If I feared myself at times, and paled at sight of my own face, what would these happier damsels say if I confessed to them my wild visions? These grew upon me with more intensity as I became older, and oft at night I heard voices, bidding me arise and escape to the wilderness, or to the heights of lonely mountains. They tell me now these were the voices of demons commanding me join the witches' sabbath, and my judges say that doubtless I arose and went. Witnesses also have sworn they saw me in strange shapes fleeing through woods and marshes at night. Alas! I know not if this be true. If so, the power hath left me now. Shut up in this doleful prison, no spell comes to my memory which shall change me to bird, or hare, or wehr-wolf, and so help me to escape the fagot and the flames.

Well, perchance it is best to die and be forgiven. Rather would I choose death than a return to sorcery. Ah, me! I did not wish to be a witch. The sin grew upon me as a fever in the blood grows, till the weird power within me was stronger than I. Yet if I could interpret dreams, and read thoughts, and see as in a vision the faces of the absent, I wist not that it was wicked; and I swear I have no remembrance of all the evil things witnessed against me. If in the night I arose, and fled away as a bird or a deer, I knew it not; though I will not deny that oftentimes in the mornings I have found my pillow wet with tears, and my head heavy, and my limbs aching, as I have heard happier maidens say theirs did after much dancing.

Well, these be honourable men who have tried me, so I will not gainsay them. It may be that much sorrow, and the torture, and the dungeon have taken away my memory; so no shadow, of my wanderings in unholy shapes, rests upon my brain.

It so happened that as my father painted the Saxon queen Ambrose stood and looked on. Now Beatrice had sat for the figure, the rounded arms, the swelling neck; but mine was the woful face that gazed upward in prayer.

"Your queen's form is beautiful," said Ambrose, "but I like not her face."

I spoke not, though a sharp pang ran through me at his cruel words; and clasping my hands I cast them upwards wildly, forgetting who was by.

"There is the look I needed," cried my father in anger; "why not have done that yesterday, girl?"

Then they disputed on the queen's face, till my father threw down his pencil, and bade Ambrose finish it himself.

"Right willingly," he answered. "To my mind the face should show the shrinking of the flesh, the fear of the *woman*, not the faith of the *soul*."

"Then your queen will burn to death," said my father, "and mine through faith would escape."

"If she had faith like Samson, the red-hot iron would scorch, and pain would pierce through the mask of courage on the face," said Ambrose, taking up the brush. "Now, Zillah, think thyself a witch, and yonder pile of wood thou seest in the painting is to burn thee. Fancy thou feelest the fire touch the tender sole of thy foot, then shrink back upon thy chair and shriek. Well done, girl; now will I paint the queen's first step upon the glowing iron bravely."

So I sat all that day to Ambrose,

and as his hard unloving eyes looked into my face, I felt about my heart a torture like the fiery ordeal of the queen.

CHAPTER II.

I SPEAK of this picture because it wrought out my fate. Being finished, many came to see it, and my father, a curious man, wishing to know what the people said, put up a curtain by the painting, and placed me behind it in ambush.

On the second day of the show, when I, being weary, half slept with my head upon my hands, the sound of a voice roused me, bringing me to my feet as the cry of fire might. All my blood chilled at that voice, and there thrilled through my frame a thousand warnings, whispering of sorrow and death.

O, if I had but listened, if I had but heeded this cry of my good angel! Looking beyond the curtain, myself unseen, I beheld a man of some forty years, of a grave and steadfast face, and noble presence, yet slightly stooping, and dressed soberly though richly.

"The queen is surely a living woman," he said. "Who is the maiden?"

"The queen wears the face of the painter's daughter, my lord," answered the lady with him.

"It is a strange face," mused the noble. "Do you know the lady?"

"Faith, my lord," she answered haughtily, "my knowledge lies not among painters or such-like, but I have heard Beatrice Damer say she is somewhat of a witch, and moody and silent as a cloistered nun."

"Damer!" repeated the noble; "is she of Zurich?"

"Yes; but her father was a noble, exiled from England."

The knight mused a moment, then said—

"And what doth this demoiselle say of the painter's daughter?"

"O, the maddest things! How she falls at times into a trance, or

sleep; and in this sleep she can reveal secrets, interpret dreams, and foretell the future. But, truly it is somewhat dangerous to speak of her art. Such powers can only come of sorcery."

"There are more powers than we wot of, lady," returned the knight; "the world is young yet. This girl is wondrous beautiful, both in face and form."

"O, the Saxon queen hath Beatrice Damer's shape, my lord. Zillah hath but her face; her form is thin, and somewhat crooked. But what think you of the picture?"

"The queen shrinks too fearfully from the ordeal, lady. Being innocent, and full of faith, she will tread the ploughshares unscathed, and her face should be brave and calm, not fearful."

"Ah, as her father painted it at first. But methinks the horror and fear of pain depicted in the queen is more natural," said the lady.

"Not to that face," returned the knight. "The young painter understands not the woman he has painted."

"Well, I, as a woman, say I should fear horribly the red-hot iron; and I think the queen's face would have looked as the young Ambrose hath limned it."

"Madam, had you been the queen it would have looked so," said the knight.

Then they moved away; and I heard the rustle of the lady's rich robe, and the stately tread of the noble, as they passed through our poor doorway.

"So I am crooked and a witch," I said to myself bitterly. "What have I done to Beatrice Damer that she should take away my good name?"

And for the first time I evil-wished her, and longed in my heart that I were indeed a witch.

"Zillah!" cried the voice of Ambrose. Startled I looked up, and



G. J. Stannard, del.

W. L. Thomas, sc.

ZILM IN THE SECRET CHAMBER.

saw him at the curtain, holding it aside as he stood. He was pale, and though he smiled his lip trembled.

"I am sorry thou hast heard this," he said. "Thou art not so crooked, Zillah, as the lady's speech. It was empty babble, child; naught else."

"I can see in the mirror what I am," I answered calmly. "But tell me, Ambrose, do I seem to thee a witch?"

"Tush!" he answered; "I wonder Beta hath uttered such cruel giddy words."

And for the first time since I had grown a woman, he fixed his eyes on me without that stony look in them that chilled me.

"Poor child!" he said softly; "no, thou art no witch, Zillah; I swear it."

Then he let the curtain drop; and with a burning glow upon my cheek I rose, and moving it gently, I watched him as he went away.

"No, not a witch; and yet if, by some witchcraft, I could only make him love me!"

And sitting down again, I pondered in my loneliness on unlawful things—on spells and sorcery, and that weirdness in my blood that made me differ from other maidens.

CHAPTER III.

THE next day my father shut his studio against all comers.

"The painting was sold," he said, "and the English baron who had bought it would not have it shown."

Then I heard this was the noble whose voice had startled me; and he had made my father great offers to come to England, and paint the ceilings of a stately castle which he had newly built.

"Thou wilt not go to England, father?" I cried.

"Why not?" he answered angrily. "It is a rich country, and this count pays like a prince. See

what he hath given me for my Saxon queen."

He showed me a great purse of gold; but I turned my eyes from it, shuddering. A voice in my heart told me this was the price of my blood, and I loathed the sight of its glitter.

"Where shall I live in thy absence, father?" I said, timidly hoping the hand of fate would spare me.

"Thou goest with me, Zillah," he answered. "This English noble saith there is room, and to spare, in his goodly castle on the Avon."

I knew it before he spoke; yet now I grew faint, and a shadow like the shadow of death fell upon me.

"Let me stay in Zurich, father," I cried. "Let me stay in Zurich and live."

"Life and health are as sound and safe in England as elsewhere, gentle damsel," said a voice.

And turning, I saw the English noble standing courteously in our doorway. He was of tall stature and fair pale face, his nose high and hooked, his beard black, but his eyes light hazel. I thought him evil-looking, yet the world called him handsome; so let it stand that he was handsome, and — and noble, since all say so.

"Life is not safe there for me, my lord," I said to him in my mother's tongue; "for I have seen in a vision a man like thee tempting me into sorceries and death."

His light eyes sparkled at this, and bending his face near to mine, he answered in soft tones:

"So the good painter understands not English? That is well. Zillah, I came hither only to seek thee. On thy mother's side we are akin."

"I am only a poor painter's daughter," I said, shrinking from his outstretched hand.

"There is witch's blood in thee, Zillah, and blood is stronger than water, even if it be holy water," he

answered ; " and through that blood I claim thee. Thy mother's mother was my granddame's sister. Thou must come to England, girl ; there is no escape for thee. Meet me at sunset on the bridge, and I will tell thee more."

Then he talked to my father of our journey, and, scarcely glancing again at me, he departed.

I would not go to the bridge, I said ; but as the sun went down, I felt upon my heart, as it were, cords of fire, and these drew me forth, and set me in that man's presence. He took me by the hand, and led me to a little knoll by the lake, where pine-trees grew. Here we sat, and he discoursed long on strange things : on the power to be gained by fasting and watching, on spells, on the secrets hidden in the earth and air, on the enchantments to be wrought by the eye and the hand and the waving arms, and on that mystic force in the voice and the presence of a kingly man which make other men's souls obedient to his.

Never had lips spoken to me as this man's lips ; and as I listened to words that seemed the interpretation of my own secret thoughts, I trembled.

" Scarcely have I courage to muse on these unlawful things," I said ; " and you, my lord, are brave enough to speak them."

" Not to the world, Zillah,"—and he smiled mournfully—" but only to thee. Such thoughts run in the blood of some, and I have told thee we are akin."

Then he took from his neck a chain of gold, and hanging to it was a picture in enamel of a lady. At first I thought I looked upon mine own face ; then I saw she wore a dress of an ancient fashion, and a crown of pearls was on her head.

" By this I recognised thee, Zillah, when I looked upon the Saxon queen," he said. " This is thy ancestress, whose blood runs in thy

veins and mine. She was deemed a sorceress, and being tried—her judges Ignorance and Fear—she perished at the stake. All her kith and kin forsook her little child, who, wandering in penury and want, came at last to be a servant to a Flemish merchant, then thy father's wife. Hearing all this from my mother when a boy, I said it was base to forsake the child, and when I was a man I would find her. Thus, Zillah, I have sought thy mother many years, and I have found thee."

" Not for kindness do you claim kin with me," I answered. " Leave me in peace."

" If I hope to find in thee the gifts thy granddame had, what then ?" he asked. " Unhappy in love, and despised, what peace is there for thee at Zurich ?"

I grew white to the lips as he spoke.

" Do not tempt me," I said with tears.

But as I spoke the sound of music came wafted to us by the breeze, and I saw Ambrose and Beatrice seated in a little boat, floating down the lake. He toyed with her long hair, and she leaned upon him as he sat ; and ever and anon he touched the flute he held, piping forth sweet slow music, with rippling laughter and gentle kisses for its interlude.

I hid behind the trees ; but her laughing face and his glowing lips passed so close, that my eyes looked into theirs, and saw the love in them, and my heart grew bitter as gall.

Then my kinsman leant forward, and whispered in my ear :

" Zillah, I, and I only, can give thee the secret desire of thine heart. I promise thee that yonder careless woman shall never be the wife of Ambrose, and his love shall return to thee, only consent to come into England and be my witch."

And in an evil moment I con-

sented hastily. And the knight, stooping, took my hand and kissed it.

"I will never leave thee or forsake thee, Zillah," he said in his rich mournful voice; "and I will crown thee with wealth and honour."

"What are these to me," I answered, "when there is no one in the wide world who loves me?"

"Power is love," returned the knight. "We will gain power, and the world will come to our feet."

I did not heed him. I was thinking of Beatrice's careless grace; I was thinking of the passionate heart of Ambrose given to her—the heart that might be mine.

"O sir knight, let not thy promise fail me," I said wistfully.

"It shall not fail, Zillah." And drawing me towards him, he pressed his lips upon my brow.

CHAPTER IV.

AMBROSE bade me farewell sadly.

"Thine is the face I have known and loved the longest, Zillah," he said. "I shall miss thee sorely when thou art gone."

"What! with Beatrice Damer as a consolation?" I asked bitterly.

"Perhaps she will be a poor comforter," he answered, and he turned away with a weary look.

And so we parted; I with a wild hope in my heart, and he with a fear in his.

It was a weary journey by sea and land before we reached the castle of my kinsman. But I speak not of this, nor of the stately riches of his house; I speak only of a secret chamber in the eastern tower, wherein were crucibles, and censers, and strange fires, and things which I dare not tell of. Here too were couches of Persian silk and embroidered hangings, and carpets of tapestried work, so soft that a foot-fall was never heard. There was no window, but a costly lamp, ever

alight, hung from the ceiling, and sweet perfumes filled the air always.

In this place did my evil kinsman practise his enchantments; and though in all these I was his aid and helper, I speak truth when I say I knew naught of them. For when I entered the secret chamber at dead of night, my senses sank into a deep sleep, and I remembered not what I uttered or what I saw.

The baron had said courteously to my father:

"Paint as leisurely as it liketh thee, and sit at thine own table; but as for thy daughter, her mother was of my blood, and I shall treat her as a kinswoman."

"My wife could not be of your kin, my lord; she was but a servant," returned my father, and his face paled strangely.

"I care not what she was," answered the baron. "Say no more."

So he told his household I was a kinswoman, and he gave me jewels and silks, and all things befitting a lady; but I felt these were given me for my witchcraft, and I hid my bitterness in my heart.

So by day I was the Lady Zillah, honoured as an innocent maiden; but at night I knew I was a witch. In the blessed sunlight, when freed from that strange sleep, I used no witcheries. Only, knowing I had the power, I have sometimes charmed away the pains of the sick, not thinking I did evil.

As for the baron, he gained great honour through me, and in a year he was a belted earl. Then I spoke to him of his promise, and asked to go back to my own land.

"The painter Ambrose shall come to England," he answered. "I have kept my word with thee. The king, at my request, has granted to Beatrice Damer her father's lands, and he has given to me the wardship of her and them; and she shall not marry the painter."

I was amazed at this news, and

sorrowful, fearing Ambrose would be grieved.

"Have patience, Zillah," said my kinsman. "I have told thee thou shalt have the desire of thine heart."

So I waited in gloomy patience. And soon after this the earl went up to court, returning after a while with a great retinue of lords and ladies, and among these his young son, a wan, sickly boy, with a gentle beauty on his face. Have I said my kinsman was a widower?

"It would not suit thee, Zillah, to mingle with this gay company," he said, "so keep thy chamber till they be gone."

Thus I found myself a prisoner; yet when the gay company went out with hawk and hound, I stole down into the garden and walked alone; or I crept on through the trees to the huts of the poor, and healed them of their sickness with herbs and spells; and I sang ditties to them, or told them wild stories that grew upon my brain through loneliness. These were my only companions, for my father painted every day: ceiling and hall, chapel and wall, he covered with the work of his pencil; and I was ever alone, feeling the whispers of the household creeping about me evilly.

One day in the dreary pleasaunce I sat in a little bower where roses lay dying, and sang to myself. Hawk and hound had departed, and I thought all the noble company was away with them, so I sang from my heart a wild Swiss lay, with echoes in the music coming down from the mountains and dying softly on the lonely lakes. Sadly, sweetly, the old Swiss words and wild music dropped from my lips, bringing rushing memories and fast-falling tears; and choked by these I stopped singing. "Ah, do not stop, sweet lady!" said a boyish voice; and straightway there stepped from the laurels a pale child clad in velvet.

Guessing him to be the young count, I rose and saluted him.

"Are you a prisoner, lady?" said the boy. "I have watched you these many days from my window, walking in the pleasaunce like a captive, but I never see your face at our board; and though I hear your voice sometimes singing, I hear it oftener weeping."

Now I feared to tell him I was a distant kinswoman, so I said humbly, "Sir, I am from Zurich; I am the daughter of the painter here. If I am sad it is with pining for my own land. Memories of the mountains and lakes come to my eyes in tears."

"Poor lady!" said the child, putting his hand on mine; "your voice is like my mother's. Will you sing to me again?"

I sang to him softly, while the boy gazed into my face with large eager eyes, too earnest, too sorrowful for childhood.

"You will come again?" he cried, clinging to my hand as I rose to leave him. But I avoided the pleasaunce for many days, till the child, being bent on seeing my face, found out my chamber, and came and sat at the door patiently till the yearning of my heart moved me to speak to him. Yet fearing sorrow would befall him for his love for me, I strove often to make my speech rough to him; but he heeded it not.

"I will wait, Zillah, till thine anger be gone," he would say in a low sweet voice.

Then opening my door with a soft hand I saw him sitting patiently on the rushes, his sweet gentle face and large bright eyes turned towards me lovingly.

Ah me! could I help it if my arm stole around him, and our two sad faces touched each other with a gentle kiss, or sometimes mingled tears? Was it witchcraft that my heart yearned over him like a mother, and my hand stroked his golden

hair caressingly, and my ears longed for his pretty talk, and my lips fell upon his pale cheeks with such kisses as his mother had given him? No, there was no sorcery in this, and no sorcery in the dear love which the poor wan child paid me back from the treasures of his gentle heart.

I was glad when the gay company all departed, but, to my sorrow, the earl stayed, and he sought me as of old to work spells for him. Grown weary and sick of heart, I said I would not, unless he redeemed his word and brought Ambrose to me.

"Foolish maiden, hast thou not yet forgotten the vain painter?" he said laughing.

But that night, in the secret chamber, he spoke more kindly.

"Zillah, by thy aid I have discovered great things," he said, "so I will not refuse thy request. If thou canst find the painter, let him come and aid thy father."

"Alas! I know not where he is," I answered. "He hath left Zurich."

"Then let us weave a spell and bring him," he said.

And I, being awake and in my senses that night, saw him draw a circle with strange figures in the centre, on which he placed a tripod, whereon there burnt a pale blue flame, and in the midst of the flame there came up the semblance of a hand.

"Quickly, Zillah," whispered my kinsman; "sign this!"

He held a paper towards me, and I, pricking my finger, signed it with the gout of blood that came forth. Then he thrust it into the fire, and the hand clutching it disappeared; upon which a great darkness fell upon me, and in this I felt drawn towards the fire till it scorched me.

"Come back, Zillah!" cried the earl, and as his hand seized me I fainted. Except once, this was the only time that I was awake when in the secret chamber.

When I opened my eyes to sense

again, the censer, the fire, and the ring of flame around the tripod were gone, and I saw only the face of my kinsman leaning over me.

"Had you crossed the fire, Zillah, you must have died. But your wish is granted. What did you desire?"

"I wrote, 'Let Ambrose come hither, and let him love me,'" I answered, as my cheeks glowed with sudden shame.

The earl laughed at this. "Not so, my fair witch; this is what was written."

And crossing the circle, to where the fire lay dead, he lifted from it the paper, scorched, yet not burned. And on it I read this: "Let the wife of Ambrose be accursed, let her die as the wicked die, and let the heart of her husband be turned against her." I flung the paper from my hand, and burst into bitter tears.

"Am I come to this," I said, "that like an evil woman I should scatter curses on the innocent? I wish no evil to the wife of Ambrose, let her be whom she may. It was cruel to deceive me thus."

"I thought the spell would suit thy jealous nature," said the earl. "And take heed thou marry him not thyself. It was to hinder this that I wrote it."

My soul was sick for sorrow, when in the morning I awoke and remembered this as a dream.

CHAPTER V.

"O ZILLAH, have I found thee at last?"

It was the voice of Ambrose, and I shrieked aloud for fear. He looked worn and weary, and he was clad poorly in a pilgrim's garb. He seized my palfrey by the rein, and stooping he kissed my hand.

"Is the Lady Beatrice near by, Ambrose?" I said in a trembling voice.

"Beatrice has deserted me," he

answered, and his face flushed scornfully. "Have you not heard, Zillah, how the English ambassador at Paris sent messengers to her, saying his king had restored her father's lands? And not heeding my prayer, she departed with the retinue sent for her."

"But you followed her to England, Ambrose."

"And found her a great lady, too proud to give a smile to old friends. Since then I have sought thee and thy father, Zillah, in much painful wandering."

So I brought Ambrose to the earl, and it was settled he should help my father in the great work going on in the castle. Thus I saw him every day, and loved him better than of old, and being freed now from his love for Beatrice, his heart turned to me, and he loved me as dearly as man ever loved woman.

"Zillah," he said once, "I think I have loved thee always, but Beatrice made me fear thee somewhat. She swore she saw thee lay a spell upon an old fish-wife, who beat a little child with a cruel hand. And under this spell the hag belaboured her own visage till she shrieked to thee for mercy."

I laughed, and yet I trembled. "'Tis true," I said; "I have some such power. Some I can make sing and dance, laugh or cry; I cannot do this with all people. And I know not what the gift may be; but surely, Ambrose, it is not witchcraft?"

But he answered me, with a face paling to the hue of death, "Beware, Zillah, of that power; be not tempted to use it. It is of the Evil One, and it will destroy thee."

So, fearing to lose his love, I dared not tell him of the secret sorceries to which the earl had forced me; but I feigned illness, and refused again and again to go to the magic chamber, till my kinsman grew angry and dealt roughly with me. Then I told Ambrose of his

hardness, and we two, being resolved to flee, went to a priest and were married secretly. Yet I still lingered, because of my father, who refused to go with us and leave his work unfinished. And during this delay, there was brought to the castle a litter, closely curtained, guarded by armed men, and I saw alight from it Beatrice—the Lady Beatrice Damer now.

She spoke courteously to my father and Ambrose; but as she passed me, she drew away her robe, and muttered—

"I like not witch-blood."

That night I wept bitterly at my husband's knee, and besought him to leave this evil castle. Then with kisses and kind words he soothed me, saying he would but wait till the earl's treasurer had paid him for his work, then we would go.

The next day a whisper ran through the household that the earl would wed his ward—the Lady Beatrice; and the poor wan boy—his son—came to me with a white face, and asked if it was true.

I said "yes" with my eyes, not daring to speak. Then the child put his arms about me, and leant his cheek against mine.

"Zillah," he said, "I have but thee in the world; do not forsake me for yon cold-hearted painter. I love thee a million times better than he can love. Tarry for me, Zillah, till I be a man; then I will make thee a lady, and thou shalt never weep again."

"Come away from the witch, boy!" cried a sharp voice.

It was the Lady Beatrice, who had stolen softly on us as we sat in the embrasured window. And at her bidding the child's small arms fell down from my neck, and, with lips quivering, and tearful eyes looking back on me, he went with her, she dragging him by the hand.

That evening, as I sat alone spinning, the earl came upon me suddenly.

"Zillah," he said sternly, "I will not have my child's heart turned against the lady who is to be his mother."

"She lies, if she says I did it!" I answered scornfully. Then my courage failed, and I fell on my knees.

"My lord, I have troubled your roof too long; let me depart."

"Put aside such a thought for ever, Zillah," he said in a firm voice. "Thou art my guest—or prisoner, if thou wilt—for life. Come to the secret chamber to-night, and burn me there the waxen effigy of mine enemy—the man who stands next the king."

"I cannot do your bidding, my lord," I answered; "for my husband, to whom I owe a holier obedience, has commanded me to cease these arts."

"Thy husband, girl! Who is thy husband?"

"Ambrose the painter, my lord."

Even here in the close prison I shrink from thought of the earl's fury. He struck me to the ground in a sudden frenzy; but as I crouched, fearing a second blow, I felt his strong arms wind about me, and his lips stifled my cry with kisses.

"O rare witch and fool!" he said; "not to see these many months how thy sorceries have beguiled me into love. O Zillah! Zillah! in the witch-chamber where we wrought our spells, when that mystic sleep bound thee, thine arms have clasped my neck, and thy lips have pressed mine. Surely it is a lie that thou art a wife. Say it is false, my witch, and I forgive thee."

Breaking from him, I fell upon my knees, and gazed into his cruel face with looks of horror. Was he speaking truth? was I so lost? Had my lips ever touched his,—I, who so feared and hated him that I shuddered even if his shadow crossed me? Then there came into my memory thronged shapes of pain and

horror unutterable. The fumes of incense and the smoke of enchantments rose up before me, and within their wreathed vapours writhed grim shadows and forms of demons. And with these there grew upon my lips the earl's hot kiss, drawing soul and sense away. Yielding to it as to a hideous spell, I sank down senseless as his arms clasped me.

I awoke in the witch-chamber. I was lying on the silken couch, and before me rose the perfume of incense and the smoke of enchantments. Between the wreathed mists I saw dimly the form of the earl, who came and went like a shadow; but I could neither speak nor move, for the spices that burned close by numbed my sense. Then suddenly he turned; he fixed his eyes on mine, and waved his arms as wizards do. I struggled against the spell; I loathed the power conquering me. But all was vain; and soon my eyes closed. My arms fell upon his neck, and my head drooped upon his shoulder. Then his lips touched my ear, whispering words of love.

"My life, this night I have but half-chained thy senses. I would have thee *know* that thou art *mine*. Now call this grovelling painter, this man who dares to love my witch. It will be rare sport to behold his wonder when he sees thee here."

Obedient to his wicked will, obedient to the lightest touch of his hand or glance of his eye, I called in spirit to my husband. I bade him come through fire and peril, through sleep or watching, through health or sickness; alive or dead, I bade him come.

Then upon my fainting heart I heard the echo of his steps through corridor and vaulted hall, through the masked door where tapestry hung, and on to the sliding panel. As his hand touched this, my writhing spirit strove in a last struggle to be free; but the voice of the wizard-earl whispered, "Say thou lovest me,

witch, and let this man hear thee.' And my loathing lips uttered the words he bade me.

"Harold, my love, my love!" And clasping his neck, my bowed head sank on his shoulder.

As one in a dream, Ambrose stood bewildered, his face like a dead man's. Then I saw a jewelled hand—Beatrice's—seize his arm and draw him away. And the great torture I felt did not awake me, till the earl unbound the spell. Then, in my misery and shame, as his mocking eye laughed in my face, I fell weeping and moaning at his feet.

"Poor witch! Go to thy husband now, and see if he will accept thy company. Get to thy chamber and weep there; I hate tears."

I fled from him, weeping as I went; and thus in anguish I sought Ambrose, but he was gone. Then, like one maddened, I rushed forth into the night, and overtook my husband beyond the drawbridge, walking slowly, with his head bent low and lips quivering. I caught him by the hand, and implored him to hear me.

"I have seen thee, witch!" he answered. And casting me from him he went his way.

I would have followed him, but as I arose from my despair, the earl seized me, and held me in his strong clasp. I saw Ambrose pass out of my sight.

And henceforth I was alone and silent; for I would not rack my father's heart with my doleful story.

CHAPTER VI.

THE Lady Beatrice was cruel to the child, and I saw his gentle face grow wan, and his step get slow and languid. At last he lay sick nearly unto death, and he would take nothing save from my hand. So they let me come to him, and I tended him gently, hiding my ghastly woe as I could from his sight.

"Thou art fading like a flower, Zillah," he said, putting his wasted arms about me. "When I am a man, I will be thy champion, and if any have wronged thee, thou shalt have redress."

Alas! there was no redress or mercy for me on earth.

I loved the boy, and often I put my face upon his pillow, and the touch of his soft cheek comforted me for my woes.

"I shall not be with thee long, little one," I said. "The Lady Beatrice weds thy father in a week, and I fear she will drive poor Zillah from thy bedside."

"Then I shall have a cruel step-dame and thou a hard mistress," he answered. And turning his wan face on the pillow, I saw tears course down it softly. I wiped them away, kissing him, and we sat hand in hand silent, till the twilight grew into darkness.

They were married at court before the king, with tournaments, and pageantry, and feasting; and while they revelled there fell upon me and the child a short peace—a little lull in my great sorrow.

In this tranquillity my father died: O, thank Heaven he died! And kneeling down beside his cold face in the night I vowed I would quit all unlawful arts, and flee from this wicked prison for ever. When morning dawned I went softly to the chamber of the sick child, and found him sleeping. His face was sicklier, sadder than I had ever seen it, and his cheeks were wet as though he had slept weeping. I dared not look twice on him, lest I should stay for his sake and lose my soul. So I put a little flower in his thin hand as a farewell, and stole away, not waking him.

Thus I fled from my unholy thraldom. And now I cannot recount what happened to me, for my memory is full only of dim shapes. I know I wandered hither and

thither—not always in my right mind—till my beauty was gone through weather and want, and the lameness that rest and luxury had almost healed grew upon me painfully. I cannot say how long I wandered. I see, as in a picture, the summer sun, and the winter snow descending on the head of a weird woman who begs for charity, while children run from her and men chase her as a witch.

I was crooked, as I have said, and lame, and poor; and my long hair, which in summer-time I washed in clear streams and decked with flowers, fell down to my feet. So you see I was like a witch.

I remember this summer—this last summer of my life—with undimmed memory. I remember the bright sun shining on me, as I came timidly into the harvest-field, and humbly prayed the reapers to let me glean. I remember the frightened faces that looked into my face, and the rough hands that seized me.

"Bring her to my lord!" they cried.

As they dragged me on, bridge and moat, buttress and tower, grew familiar to me; and as we crossed the hall I looked up on the paintings my father's hand had wrought, and I saw myself face to face with that great wizard, and his wife the Lady Beatrice.

Her eyes gleamed with joy and hate as she saw me.

"Ah, Zillah the witch!" she cried; "have thy witchcrafts brought thee to this?"

I clasped my hands and looked into her pitiless face, but my lips would not speak for quivering.

"Lodge her in the dungeon," she said, and turned away.

But I was past grief and fear; and careless as a stone drops into a well, so did I fall upon the straw of that damp dungeon, and forget in sleep my misery and my madness.

A bright light awoke me, and a strong hand lifted me to my feet.

"Zillah, it is I," said the earl's voice. "There is power still shining in those wild eyes of thine. Promise to obey me, and I will free thee from these chains, and hide thee from my lady's eye, and all that gold can give shall be thine."

"I will not listen," I said calmly; and I covered my ears with my shackled hands. Then he took them in his strong grasp.

"Zillah, I have discovered strange secrets in earth and air, and with thy help I can do yet greater things. These mysteries are no sorceries, they are truths; and through these I can show men how to travel swift as birds. I can build ships of iron—"

But I tore my hands from his grasp, and ran shrieking round my dungeon, drowning his prayers and promises with my cries. Wearied at last with my madness he flung me from his hand in fury.

"Die witch, then, if you will!" he said. And he took up his lamp to depart. But at the grate he turned, and as the light shone upon his face, I saw it was full of bitterness. "Zillah, poor fool and witch," he said, "there is something in my soul that is sorry for thee. Awake, thou art only a poor weak woman; but in sleep thou hast told me some of the wisest secrets that exist on earth; see here, girl." And he took from his vest a crystal globe, dark-looking, and filled with a lead-like powder. "Through thee I have made this ball for my enemies. Nay, do not touch it, there are a hundred deaths in it. But the ball alone is useless. I need some weapon, some deadly instrument which shall hurl it among our foes. I ask thee, then, for England's sake, be my witch again."

I shuddered at his words. "Our Lady forbid," I cried, "that I should aid thee in thy sorceries!"

England has stout arms and arrows
for her foes. Take thy witch-ball
away; it maddens me!"

He looked at me with exceeding sorrow. "Zillah, thy brain is crazed. And I am verily to blame that in thy witch-sleep I made thee feign love for me. I did it to drive thy husband from thee. I feared as wife and mother thy weird powers would depart, and all my great discoveries would die. Alas! they perish now, perhaps for centuries, perhaps for ever!"

I would not answer him. I sat cowering in a corner of the dungeon, my head upon my hands.

"Zillah, do not fear me. In all those hours of mystic sleep, I swear I never touched thine hand. It was but to deceive that puling painter—that coward unworthy of thy heart—that I feigned love."

"It was a deed worthy of a wizard," I said, "to trample thus on a woman's happiness and honour!"

"What was one woman's peace, compared to the glorious truths I sought—truths that would make millions happy?"

He spoke as if to himself, but my heart swelled at his cruelty.

"Leave me!" I cried in indignation.

"If I leave thee thou wilt die, Zillah—die as a witch."

"I care not. Better die than be a witch again."

"Zillah! Zillah! the times are not ripe for such as thee or me. And if thou diest, thy innocent blood will be on my head."

"On thy head let it be," I answered.

He stood a moment at the door, gazing on me sorrowfully, the dying lamp throwing a pale light across his haggard face.

"Dost thou forgive me, Zillah?" he said.

I thought of my lost life, my crazed wanderings, and my hus-

band's heart turned against me, and my eyes swam in salt tears.

"But there was One who suffered more," I said to myself; so I answered, "Go in peace; I forgive thee."

Then there fell between us a short silence, broken only by the sob which gasped from my dry throat.

"Zillah, thou shalt not die," said the earl. And going to the grated window of my dungeon, he flung the huge key he held into the moat.

"The postern-door at the top of these narrow stairs is unlocked; escape, Zillah, for thy life. Alas! and all those great things that I had hoped to do will die now for ages. Hasten, girl, lest I attempt again to seize thee!"

He undid the chains upon my hands, and as these dropped with a heavy clank upon the stones, he left me. I listened to his ascending steps, but at the top of the narrow stairs he missed his footing and fell. Then a noise like thunder shook the castle from the topmost turret to the dungeon-floor, a flash of fire blinded me, and I fell senseless. When I awoke, I saw moonlight through a rift in the wall, and passing over fallen stones and dust, I reached the ruins of the stairs, and beheld the earl lying dead. Stooping over him I undid his vest, and found the ball of crystal which he had made by sorcery was gone. Doubtless this had killed him; and his face was blackened as by fire. Moreover, an unholy smell of sulphur, and a hideous smoke, filled the ruin.

I sat by the dead man amazed, not seeking to escape; and here the frightened warders found me.

"The witch! the witch!" they cried; "she hath slain my lord the earl. He lieth here dead—slain by sorcery; and the wall is rent, and the castle shaken, by her witchcrafts."

And so, amid weeping, and cries of terror, and blows, I was carried to another dungeon.

CHAPTER VII.

I WILL not tell of the long, long months in prison ; I will not tell of the torture and the chain. These bloodshot eyes have wept tears of blood, and these parched lips have shrieked in vain for mercy. I confessed willingly to all my sorceries, but these did not content them ; so under torture I shrieked a thousand falsehoods. I told of things that could not be ; I lied again and again against my soul.

O, I satisfied their greedy ears with lies, for which sin I weep now ; and therefore I write this confession, wherein alone I speak the truth.

When my trial came, the warders swore it was I who had killed the earl—I who had shaken the foundations of the castle, and opened the door of my prison by enchantments.

The Countess Beatrice witnessed against me with calm cruelty ; and, though I appealed to her for my life's sake to say if her husband practised not strange arts, she answered—

“ Never, witch, unless bewitched by thee.”

And the judge said that, save by sorcery, no such ball as I had spoken of could be made ; therefore I was condemned by my own lips.

Then they brought a witness into court, the sight of whom wrung my heart. Men carried him on a pallet-bed, and as I saw his pale face lying on the pillow, I wept.

“ Thou, too, Gilbert ?” I cried.

But the child turned his eyes from me, and would not look my way.

Then he was raised in men's arms, for without their aid he could not sit, and in a sad low voice he told the judge my witcheries had made him love me, and the bitterest draught from my hand had seemed sweet to him. And many other

things he said, having his heart turned against me by my enemy his stepmother. But while he spoke, he kept his small white face away from my face, nor looked upon me once till the men bore him away ; then his eyes turned on me, and his pale cheek flushed with sudden pain.

“ O Zillah, is it thou, so changed ? Would to God they had not made me speak against thee. Pardon me, Zillah, pardon me !”

“ I forgive thee, my poor child !” I answered. “ Do not grieve when I die.”

“ Woman,” cried the judge, “ all the Court can see to what a cruel strait and weakness thy sorcery hath brought the young Lord Gilbert. Take the noble boy from her presence.”

So the men bore him away, but he was weeping as he went, and I heard him say to the men that he would pray to die first, for he could not bear to live and see Zillah die a cruel death.

Alas ! for that tender heart. In forcing him to cruelty they killed him. Yesterday the jailer said to me :

“ The young Lord Gilbert is dead. Will thy sorceries never cease, witch ? And the crowd cry aloud for thy blood : they gather fagots in the wood to-day.”

But I leant my head upon my hands, and thanked God the child was gone.

Now I hurry on to the end. As they bore the young Gilbert away, and my dry eyes watched him, I thought my worst pang went with him ; but it was not so. The voice of a new witness startled me, and turning, I saw Ambrose, my husband.

“ I am a painter,” he said ; “ I came hither by the Countess's command to finish the ceiling of the hall begun by the prisoner's father. Then I heard she was in prison. I

have known her as a witch all her life long. There is witch-blood in her; for this I pitied her once, and hoped and prayed she might escape the taint. Yet even then I felt her spell, and, to save myself, I gave my love to a noble lady; but in the end, by witchery, she beguiled my heart, and I became her husband. Then I found her faithless, and left her. I escaped for my life, fearing her sorceries and her lover's power. I have not seen her face since then till this day."

"Ambrose," I said, and rose to my feet, "I was never faithless. Thou hast been deceived by a strange glamour, past my poor wits to explain. But I loved thee ever, and I love thee still. Now, say on. Death is not so cruel as this thy treachery."

I sank down upon my seat—they had given me a seat for my weakness—and I looked sadly on his

white face working with strange tremors.

"I defy thee, witch!" he said.
"I abhor thy love and thee!"

I looked upon him, but I uttered no word more. Hope and I had parted now, and I had no more to do with love or life; my heart was broken. And when they bade me stand to hear the judge's sentence, I smiled, and wondered who the witch was that was condemned to die. I had forgot it was myself.

I was thinking of the lakes and streams of Zurich, and the mountains where I had strayed a child.

To-morrow I die, and before the winds have scattered the ashes of this poor flesh, the Countess Beatrice and the painter Ambrose will sit at their wedding-feast. And to the bridegroom I send this history and my pardon. Zillah the witch dies with prayers for him, and at peace with all.

THE BAD LORD BRACKENBURY

The only Ghost-Story which is true

BY GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA

THERE it is—"The only ghost-story which is true"! A bold assertion; but I am calmly confident, and throw down a gage of defiance, which may be promptly taken up not only by my ghost-story-telling colleagues in this miscellany, but by vast numbers of lady and gentlemen ghost-seers all over the three kingdoms and the British Colonies—to say nothing of our Indian Empire and the United States of America. "What's your cold to mine?" sulkily objected the sufferer from catarrh to him who had a bad attack of "the snuffles." There it is again. Everybody professes to believe—and probably *does* believe—implicitly in his own particular ghost-story, in the which he claims a kind of privately-personal property; but he usually refuses to place any credence in the supernatural tale related by his neighbour; nay, he not unfrequently denounces the opposition narrative as "fudge." Most of us have some dark little isle of our own, peopled entirely with phantoms; but we scornfully decline to admit that the adjacent archipelago may be haunted. Our own ghosts are all-in-all to us; but other people's ghosts are accounted as of no more moment than

the wind sighing amongst the leaves, or whistling through the crannies of a ruined hovel. I will swear to the truth of my own ghost-story to the extent of ten affidavits before ten Masters in Chancery—about the hardest ordeal of juration I can conceive. I will do battle with any man in defence of my own private phantom, on foot or on horseback, with sword, pistol, battle-axe, or quarter-staff. That the bad Lord Brackenbury saw a ghost I will maintain in the face of all the materialists in Europe; but don't talk to me about your ghosts of Admiral Hosier, and your apparitions of Mrs. Veal, and your drummers of Tedworth, and your White Ladies of Avenel, and your spectres of Cannock Chase, and your fetches of Colonel Despard, whose phantom, according to the turnkeys of Horsemonger-lane Gaol, is visible every Monday night on the top of the gate where the gallows used to be erected on execution-days, with his head under his left arm. I don't believe in these stories. I snap my fingers at such idle figments. You should be more reasonable, dear sir, or madam; you should have stronger nerves and firmer muscle of mind than to listen

for one moment to such ridiculous fancies. The ghost-stories extant are the merest rubbish. Richard III. never saw any shadows on the eve of Bosworth Field. The tyrant was suffering from delirium tremens. The blood-boltered Banquo never appeared at Macbeth's dinner-table. The murtherous Scot had merely eaten too much haggis, and had a smart touch of indigestion. Hamlet was notoriously cracked. If he had been sane he would never have gone about spouting to an imaginary personage in complete armour on the battlements at Elsinore. The ghost of Julius Cæsar never appeared to Lucius Junius Brutus; but the ghost of his Conscience may. The Witch of Endor was a mere spirit-rapper, who should have been sent to the treadmill; and the ghost of Ninus no more appeared to Semiramis than the Cock-lane ghost did to Dr. Johnson. Out of this chaos of imposture and mendacity, it is consoling and refreshing to pick out one irrefragably true ghost-story,—my own. No one but an idiot or a *Saturday* reviewer could question the existence of the phantom which was seen by the Bad Lord Brackenbury.

He was called by common consent the Bad Lord, not only by the common people, but by persons of his own degree, to distinguish him from several peers his predecessors, who had won titles to sobriquets a little more flattering. The Brackenburys were a very old family. "Braque en Berri," the name of the town and province in France from which they sprung, was adopted as a surname by the founder of the English branch, who came over with the Conqueror, and had something to do with the royal stables, and who, prior to Hastings, had no more sounding appellation than Jean Ferrailleur. From the presence of three horse-shoes proper on the family shield, it has been surmised that this Iron

John was in some manner connected with the art of farriery; but two or three hundred years later "Sir John Ferallor Brackenbury"—for the Brackenburys were baronets before they were barons—sounded very grandly and aristocratically. Almost as grandly indeed as Talbot, of which the root is *taillebot*, a cutter of upper-leathers for gentlemen's boots; and Grosvenor, which is manifestly *gros-veneur*, the professional and corpulent huntsman to some mediæval pack of hounds.

The Brackenburys were raised to the peerage by King Charles II. They had been clever enough to keep their estates during the Civil Wars; and indeed, Sir Ralph Brackenbury, surnamed the "Fox," had been one of the lords of Cromwell's council; but he was wealthy enough to lend King Charles some money soon after his Majesty's happy restoration, and he was recompensed with a baronial coronet accordingly. His son was called the "Handsome" Lord Brackenbury. He was the best dressed man of his age, consorted much with Lord Rochester and Sir Charles Sedley, and fought a duel in Hyde Park with Major Griveois, who had presumed to say that the Duchess of Portsmouth squinted. In William III.'s time there had been a "good" Lord Brackenbury, who had entertained Bishop Burnet, and founded a scholarship at Sion College, and several charity-schools at Putney. This estimable person, one of the earliest subscribers to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, was succeeded by his eldest son, whose misfortune it was to be known in history as the "Mad" Lord Brackenbury, and who,—in consequence of such inconvenient eccentricities as walking down Pall Mall at high noon without shoes and stockings, and with a lighted candle in one hand, culminating in his essaying to smoke a pipe in the House of Lords

during a debate on the bill for settling the succession to the throne, and taking off his full-bottomed wig and hurling it at the gentleman-usher of the black rod,—was sequestered from polite society and confided to the care of an exemplary person known as a "mad doctor," who, for the trifling stipend of seven hundred and fifty pounds a-year, undertook to cure the demented nobleman by starving, beating, gagging, ducking, bleeding, and blistering him with great liberality and strict punctuality.

The Mad Lord Brackenbury died, as may be naturally inferred, without issue, and his title and estates passed to his brother, on whom I blush to record there was unanimously bestowed an epithet which I really cannot bring myself to transcribe literally. Let it suffice to say that this nickname was identical with that given to a notorious Queen of England who burnt almost as many Protestants in Smithfield as her admirable sister subsequently hanged and disembowelled Romanists at Tyburn. The —— well, the Sanguinary Lord Brackenbury was an officer in the navy. As a lieutenant he had devised an infinity of ingenious tortures for the men under his sway, and as a post-captain he was believed to have originated the proud boast ascribed to a commander of much later date—that he had just left on board his ship the happiest crew in Europe, for he had flogged one half of them, and they were happy that the punishment was over, while the other half were delighted at having escaped, for that day at least, the gangway. As mutinies, however, were somewhat frequent in the ships commanded by Captain Brackenbury, the Lords of the Admiralty began at last to doubt the efficacy of a system of discipline which relied chiefly for its maintenance on keel-hauling the defenders of their country, slinging

them in bread-bags to the mizen truck, loading them with fetters, and scarifying them with the cat-o'-nine-tails; so that on promoting this pearl of disciplinarians to the rank of rear-admiral, they reluctantly begged him to accept temporary retirement from active service. That is to say Captain, now Admiral, Brackenbury was placed on half-pay; and as the ——well, the Sanguinary old admiral—he continued for upwards of half a century to be a source of great joy and contentment to the members of his own family, to his servants and dependents, and to his neighbours in the county of Lancashire, where his broad ancestral acres were situated. He went on half-pay in the last year of the reign of Queen Anne, and he did not die until some years after the accession of King George II. There is a statute of limitations, I suppose, as to the duration of the maxim *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*; and a century having elapsed since the Admiral's death, and the pompous inscription on his tombstone in Brackenbury Ferox church having become by this time pretty well effaced, and finally, the Brackenbury peerage being now extinct, there will be no harm in hinting that a more unmitigated ruffian than the Admiral never existed since perhaps the days of Tiberius or Ivan the Terrible. He married a meek young lady out of Cheshire—a demure heiress with fair hair and blue eyes. This poor wax-doll he permitted to bear him a numerous family of sons and daughters, and he then bullied her to death. Dr. Dosyford, the domestic chaplain, reminded her in her last illness that she was going to a better land; to which the poor lady replied that she hoped so, with all her heart. Dr. Dosyford was not the only ecclesiastic attached to his lordship's family. Another clergyman resided at Brackenbury Castle to educate his lordship's sons, five in number; and if this gentle-

man was not the identical Mr. Thwackum who was sometime tutor to Masters Thomas Jones and Blifil, in the family of Squire Allworthy, he must certainly have been a near relation of that distinguished pedagogue. He scourged, under the paternal direction, his unfortunate pupils unmercifully and well-nigh incessantly; and it was the chief duty of two stout footmen in the house to hold the boys on their backs while they suffered their torture. Any shortcomings in this course of discipline were supplemented by the Admiral himself, who, indeed, was quite impartial in distributing blows from a hunting-whip or a bamboo-cane among his entire family—sons, daughters, footmen, and grooms. As a country gentleman he was equally inflexible in the discharge of his duties. Woe betide the vagrant, the poacher, or the imprudent village maiden, who were brought before him. The stocks, the cage, and the whipping-post were his favourite specifics; and it used popularly to be said that the Admiral could never relish his breakfast unless he had previously signed some poor wretch's mittimus. Of course he was chairman of Quarter-Sessions, and had been high sheriff, and entertained the judges when they came on circuit to hang sheep-stealers. When, in addition to the beauteous qualities already quoted, it is stated that Admiral Lord Brackenbury swore fearfully, drank deeply, and had killed two or three gentlemen of his own degree in duel, it may be owned that he was not altogether undeserving of the singular name bestowed on him. And yet, curious to tell, he was by no means hated by the common people. He beat, bullied, cuffed, kicked, and cursed them, but they never dreamed of resenting his tyranny. His lordship was a ruffian, but not a scoundrel. He was a strictly moral man. He never claimed that tacit *droit de seigneur*

of the existence of which there are so many hints in the comedies of the eighteenth century. He preserved his game in the spirit of William Rufus, and would have hanged a cottager, if he could, for wiring a hare or springeing a partridge; yet at Christmas and Easter he gave away vast quantities of game, and of beef besides, and blankets, and brandy. The poor man who went up to Brackenbury Castle on business with my lord knew very well that his lordship would swear at him. It was far, likewise, from being a remote contingency that his lordship might break a cudgel over his shoulders or kick him downstairs. Still, the visitor was satisfied that whatever might be the episodes of the interview it would not terminate without his lordship shouting out to his butler, "Take this rogue into the kitchen, and give him a bellyful of victuals!" And many a time had a broken pate or a pair of grazed shins been compensated by the juicy sirloins, and the crusty loaves, and the toothsome cheese, and the strong humming ale of his lordship's buttery. Thus, when the Admiral died there were really those among the commonalty who wept for him.

I don't think his family cried much. I don't think his own children were sorry to know or to hear that the old brute was departed. Has it not been wisely remarked—I forget by whom—that the world, while denouncing "monsters of ingratitude," are sometimes led to expect "monsters of affection"? The Admiral had done his best to make his children hate him. All his sons, save the eldest one—whom he would have disinherited if he could—had been driven with blows and curses from home. One was in the navy, and in training to be as great a tyrant as his father had been before him. Another was in the army; and

grenadiers forty years old and six feet high shook in their pipeclayed smalls and gaiters, and turned pale under their sugarloaf shakoes, when they met the eye of savage little Captain Brackenbury. Another had married a West-Indian heiress, and was residing on a fine sugar-estate in the West Indies; where he led his five hundred negroes a most delectable life. A fourth was at the bar, and gave promise of rising thereat. I think he became subsequently that Mr. Justice Brackenbury who was so deservedly celebrated as a hanging judge, and who was on the eve of being made Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, with the title of Lord Hempseed, when he died of apoplexy after an evening sitting at the Old Bailey. As regards the Honourable Misses Brackenbury, of whom there were three—all tall, Roman-nosed, contralto-voiced damsels—they had been perhaps the best off among the Admiral's children; for, although brutally ill-treated in childhood, they had, as they grew up, asserted their rights of womanhood; and it was long currently reported that there were only three people in the world of whom the—well, the terrible old Admiral was afraid, and that the three persons in question were the Honourables Nitida, Frigida, and Placida Brackenbury. It remains only to notice the eldest son—Thomas Hugh Ferallor—the Bad Lord Brackenbury. He was as comely to look upon as had been his great-grandfather, the "Handsome Brackenbury." I have seen his portrait as a child three or four years old, painted by Hudson, Sir Joshua's master. To look upon the rosy little cherub face, the swimming eyes of violet blue, the glorious encirclement of golden tresses, the roguish yet innocent smile playing about the lips, no physiognomist, however acute, would—were he ignorant of the picture's pedigree—

dream for one moment that this angel-looking child was destined to be one of the worst men of his age. There is another portrait, too, of the Bad Lord Brackenbury, taken in the "birthday" suit he wore when, on returning in his twenty-first year from the grand tour, he was presented to King George II. He still wears his own hair, but the curls have been stiffened with pomatum and the barber's tongs, and he is frizzed and powdered to the "agony-point" of the *mode*. He is dressed in a suit of sky-blue satin, embroidered with silver; his knee- and shoe-buckles blaze with diamonds; you can see that the Honourable Thomas Hugh Ferallor Brackenbury has become a beau, a macaroni, a *petit maître*: yet there is still the same calm, innocent-looking face. Still are the violet-blue eyes sweet and placid; still is there an arch yet innocent smile on the red lips. And once more, here is his portrait, painted by Frank Hayman, Hogarth's friend. He is in the uniform of an officer in the King's Life Guards. His hair is more strictly pomatummed and curled now, and it is clubbed behind into a Ramilies cylinder. The countenance is just a shade sterner in expression, and there is a faint suspicion of lines on the forehead and between the eyebrows; yet the violet-blue orbs still swim peacefully, and the old winning, artless smile hovers on the lips.

The boy was bad from his beginning.

His papa remarked of him, once, that he could lie before he could speak, and thieve before he could walk. In the nursery he kicked the servants' shins, and fought and bit and clawed his brothers and sisters. The tutor and the stout footmen wearied themselves in carrying out the stern behests of domestic justice in his regard. His father declared at last that birch and whipcord were

wasted on him, and that he must leave his future currycombing to the masters of Eton school.

To Eton he went, and went through the ordinary course of fagging, fighting, and flogging. It was a strange thing about the lad that he was a wonderfully apt scholar, and in Latin composition excelled nearly all his schoolmates; but his scholarship neither gained him the applause of his masters nor the esteem of his comrades. By both he was intensely disliked. He was incorrigibly, and it almost seemed intuitively, foward and vicious. He was really and entirely wicked, this hardened young desperado of twelve, with a face and figure like those of St. John in Murillo's picture. He ran away four times from Eton; once to join the gipsies, another time with a gang of poachers. "He'll turn highwayman when he's old enough!" his father cried when the head-master of Eton wrote to beg that the lad might be removed from the school; "or he'll murder somebody, and be hanged at Tyburn, like my Lord Ferrers." He was brought home for a season to Brackenbury Castle, and the tutor and the stout footmen resumed their ministrations; but on the stripling coolly declaring that the next time he was flogged he would set fire to the castle, his fierce old father even grew terrified, and packed him off to Lancaster, where he was consigned for two years to the care of a Mr. Dessalines, a French Huguenot clergyman. It was there, it is said, that young Brackenbury acquired that curiously copious store of theological learning of which he afterwards—notably in his correspondence with M. Arouet de Voltaire—made so unhappy a use. He became also remarkably proficient in the mathematics, and, from his intercourse with the family and friends of the Pastor Dessalines, attained rare perfection in the French

tongue. The Huguenot clergyman had a daughter, a very beautiful girl named Honoree, who was nearly of the same age with the heir of Brackenbury. She took much kindly interest in the wicked youth, and for a time it seemed that he had become to a certain extent touched and amended by her gentle sisterly counsels. But, alas! it was the old story, and ere he was eighteen years old Mr. Dessalines was fain to entreat that Admiral Lord Brackenbury would relieve him from his charge. "I implore you, my lord," he wrote, "to remove from my house *ce malheureux jeune homme.*"

He was sent to Oxford (as a gentleman commoner, of course), and at the end of his second term was not precisely expelled the university, but was earnestly requested by the authorities to withdraw. It was at college that he was first termed "Devil" Brackenbury, an epithet which was subsequently merged into the politer but as significant one of "Bad." And yet, during the short period he remained at Oxford, he had given promise of the most brilliant faculties of scholarship. "If Satan needed a chaplain," the Head of his House remarked, "young Mr. Brackenbury should be ordained forthwith. He had best go to Rome and turn *Avvocato del Diavolo.*"

The young man did go to Rome, and to every other notable city on the European continent, but on no professional business. He made the grand tour under the ostensible tutelage of a "governor," a lay gentleman, who had formerly been a captain of horse, for it was the opinion of the admiral that clerical advice was wholly thrown away on his eldest son. A very precious pair the "governor" and his pupil made; and it was questionable, when they returned at the expiration of eighteen months' wandering about Europe, which of the two had taught his companion the most wickedness.

His education thus completed, the Honourable Hugh Brackenbury entered the King's Life Guards as a cornet; but he did not long remain in his Majesty's service. The commander of the forces speedily entreated him to dispose of his commission. "That young Pickle," declared Field-Marshal Galveston, "has done things every day he has been in the troop—things for which he should be cashiered, and have his sword broken over his head. Had he served in Flanders the Duke would certainly have hanged him. He's only fit to fight the French in the Plantations, at the head of a tribe of wild Indians."

Very soon after his retirement from the army, the old admiral with the untranscribable nickname died. "If it were in my power to cut off my eldest son Hugh with a shilling," he remarked to the family lawyer a few days before his death, "I would do so willingly; as it is, I have left everything of my personality away from him; but I grieve to think that twenty thousand a-year of the finest landed property in Lancashire must go to one of the vilest young rascals in England."

It was this young gentleman, so flatteringly described by his progenitor, who at the age of twenty-seven succeeded to a coronet and to a magnificent estate. No catalogue of his vices is needed. It is sufficient to say that he was an intimate friend of Mr. John Wilkes and Mr. John Hall Stevenson, and that he had been one of the monks of that infamous abbey of Medmenham, above whose portals were inscribed the line from Rabelais, "*Fais ce que voudras.*" It may be noted, however, among the peculiarities of this Bad Lord, that although his prodigality seemed of the most reckless nature, he was an admirable man of business, and never spent more than half his revenues; that, although he was a most determined and desperate gamester, and

a constant attendant at horse-races, he scarcely ever lost a guinea; and that, although he was one of the most abandoned of profligates and the hardest of drinkers, his face—the slightly stern expression which I noted in his last portrait excepted—failed to exhibit one trace of the stigmata of vice, but continued, until the end of his bad life, to be as beautiful in feature and as winning in expression as when he had been drawn, a mere prattling infant, by Mr. Hudson, Sir Joshua's master.

Gifted, then, with almost every grace and every accomplishment which became his age and his rank, witty and learned and urbane, a giver of great feasts, and a frequenter of gay company, Lord Brackenbury might have been adduced by a stranger who knew nothing of Lord Brackenbury's repute, as a most favourable specimen of Britain's young nobility—a pillar of the state, indeed, and with the fairest capital that sculptor ever wrought to a column. And yet, the very profligates and rakehells with whom he associated felt—and *they* were not squeamish—somewhat uneasy while they basked in the sunshine of his cool, collected, brilliant wickedness. It was a wicked age. Mr. John Wilkes was not a moral man. Medmenham Abbey was not an academy of virtue; and although a pious young king and his demure consort were doing their best to reform the manners of the court, many of the impurities of the reigns of the two first Georges still clung to St. James's. George III., indeed, would have very much liked to banish the dissolute peer from his presence; and Queen Charlotte habitually spoke of him as "dat zchocking man;" but his lordship was wealthy and loyal, and, his private friendship for Mr. Wilkes notwithstanding, was an ardent supporter of my Lord Bute and the prerogatives of the crown. "How can we

quarrel with a man—I grant him a scoundrel," the politic Scotch earl urged—"who has three boroughs in his pocket, and who at half-an-hour's notice could raise a troop of horse or equip a frigate for his Majesty's service? We needn't ask him to our tea-parties, but we must be civil to him; must we not, your ladyship?" The worst of it was, that her ladyship—I don't mean Lady Bute, but ladyshipdom generally, although it knew all about Lord Brackenbury's badness, persisted in asking him to its tea-parties, and was never more charmed than when the graceless peer was so gracefully bending over the tea-tray. The truth must out; and the truth is, that the Bad Lord Brackenbury was idolised by the women. They knew all about him; they knew far better than did the members of his own sex that his aims were uniformly flagitious; that he was as cruel as Amurath and as debauched as Charles, and that his heart was as hard as the nether millstone; but did they banish him from society, did they turn their fair rounded shoulders upon him? Was Lauzun banished from society? Do you think that Don Juan Tenorio was not admitted to the very best houses in Seville up to the very night when the Commendatore came to supper with him?

During the second season following my lord's accession to his title and estates, there was a great commotion in the fashionable world of London, owing to a report that the Bad Lord Brackenbury was about to be married. It was to a French clergyman's daughter, they said, named Desselines, at Lancaster. The old gentleman had formerly been his tutor. The ladies who were about that time weeping over the woes of Clarissa Harlowe opined, at first, that this rumoured *dénouement* to Lord Brackenbury's career was quite affecting. But speedily drying their

tears, a considerable portion of feminine and fashionable London began, with some heat, to express their opinion that a peer of the realm, and one of the wealthiest, handsomest, and most accomplished gentlemen in England might do better than marry the daughter of an old French Huguenot parson. "Some low-bred *intriguante!*" cried Lady Betty Balmayne, one of the great leaders of fashion, tossing her head. "Caught at last by a school-girl!" tittered Miss Cyclops, the great Anglo-Dutch heiress, who, for all her enormous wealth, had, in consequence of her one solitary eye and a slight protuberance between her shoulder-blades, found it somewhat difficult to obtain a husband to her mind. "The man's mad," quoth old Lady Oolibah—George I.'s Lady Oolibah—for whom Charles II.'s Duchess of Portsmouth had, in her extreme old age, stood godmother, and who was supposed to be almost as wicked as Lord Brackenbury himself. "The man's mad. In my day *on s'amusait, et on faisait une fin.* Lord Brackenbury is too young by forty years, *pour faire une fin.*" Her ladyship spoke by the card. She had made a good end of it by marrying the late Lord Oolibah—an Irish peer—on his death-bed, and not wholly, it was whispered, with that exemplary nobleman's concurrence.

While all these rumours were being tossed on fashionable tongues between Grosvenor- and Bloomsbury-squares, Lord Brackenbury went down to his castle in the north, and for a time really seemed to have turned over a new leaf, while the leaf itself was of the most immaculate description, on which his lordship proposed to write only moral precepts in the fairest round-hand. He was constantly at Lancaster, and a very frequent visitor at the house of the Pastor Desselines. To all appearance the reverend gentleman had entirely surmounted the

repugnance he had evinced towards his former pupil. He often observed in conversation with his acquaintances that it was never too late to mend, and that a married rake often made the best husband. Altogether, it was shrewdly suspected that the good Huguenot minister, whose means were very limited, was not at all averse from the prospect of assuming the position of father-in-law to a nobleman of great wealth and decided fashion. The return made by Miss Honorée Dessalines—now grown to be a surprisingly-beautiful young woman—to the numerous and sincere congratulations of her female friends, was slightly more ambiguous. She blushed and sighed when the young peer's name was mentioned; yet it was obvious that she adored Lord Brackenbury. She was a romantic and sentimental young lady, and was fond of picturing his lordship as a bird—as an eagle with sweeping pinions, as a hawk with piercing eye. My lord's eyes were not piercing: they were as innocent-looking as a dove's. Poor little dove!

The marriage, of which the possibility had been so busily bruited about between Grosvenor- and Bloomsbury-squares, never took place. Lord Brackenbury had been for the best part of a year in the north, when Miss Honorée Dessalines, stricken down by a sharp and sudden illness, died at Lancaster. Within three months her father, broken-hearted it was said, followed her to the grave. He was estranged from Lord Brackenbury before his death. But of what account was the passing away of a poor old Huguenot pastor and his daughter? Lord Brackenbury returned to London. His grand mansion in Great Coram-street was once more opened to the polite world. He wore no mourning for the dead Honorée. Why should he? He was no blood-relation to her. Tom Fildair, of

Nick's Chocolate-house in St. James's-street, and who was known as the most inquisitive fellow in town, once ventured to ask his lordship whether he had ever intended to marry the French parson's daughter. "No more than I ever intended to marry old Lady Oolibah, my dear Tom," he replied with exquisite amenity. Tom had at least expected to be kicked for asking the question. Old Lady Oolibah grinned when she heard the story. "The spark," she observed, "turns up his nose at me because he's rich. If he'd drank and gambled all his money away—and how he hasn't, passes my comprehension—*il serait bien content de faire une fin* with a lady of title and fashion, although she was old enough to be his grandmother." Lady Oolibah's rank and fashion were indisputable. Touching her extraction, it was reported that she was the daughter of the old Duchess of Portsmouth's washerwoman.

Miss Honorée Dessalines had been dead about a year when Lord Brackenbury—taking with him as boon companion and henchman that celebrated and fashionable, but impoverished Yorkshire baronet, Sir Tancred Tearacres, whom his lordship, it was said, had helped materially to ruin at the games of macao and faro, together with Captain Brassgirdle of the Life Guards, and a numerous suite of cooks, grooms, and valets—started on a tour through Italy. He remained abroad six months. It is on record that he caroused for eleven consecutive hours with the Chevalier de St. George, otherwise known as the young Pretender, at Rome,—Cardinal Aquafortissima and the Russian Prince Boozoff being of the party,—and that at Radicofani he met with the Reverend Mr. Laurence Sterne, travelling on the Continent for the benefit of his health, and had a famous bout with that virtuous ecclesiastic. He visited M. de Voltaire

also at his château of Ferney; and at Venice his intimacy with the Cavaliere Giacomo Casanova enabled him to see some very edifying phases of life in the territories of the serene republic. On the whole, his lordship kept up his reputation as gallantly in foreign parts as he was accustomed to do in that native country of which he was so bright an ornament.

It was at Geneva, returning from M. de Voltaire's château at Ferney, that a very strange adventure is said to have happened to Thomas Hugh Lord Brackenbury, surnamed the Bad. The details of the story were not known until some time afterwards, when Sir Tancred Tearacres, who expired of a complication of diseases, foremost among which was brandy, at the baths of Spa, and Captain Brassgirdle, who died in the Rules of the King's Bench Prison, made a clean breast of what they knew of the matter. They were all sojourning—I will take Sir Tancred's statement—at the Thirteen Cantons' Inn, at Geneva.* They had supped very generously, principally on partridges accommodated with truffles, and a considerable amount of burgundy had been consumed. Lord Brackenbury, as has been more than once hinted, was a very hard drinker—even for a hard-drinking age; but it was remarked that no quantity of wine taken by this strange young man seemed to have at the time, or subsequently, any effect upon him; and that even in the case of the famous carousal at Rome his lordship only drank, whereas the Young Pretender, the Cardinal, and the Boyard got drunk. On this par-

* According to Captain Brassgirdle it was at the *auberge* of the Fleur-de-Lys at Lyons that the incident occurred; but the discrepancy is wholly immaterial. Long years had rolled by before the two worthy gentlemen narrated what they had to say, and time, debts, and drink may have slightly confused their memories.

ticular occasion his lordship, after taking his share of a number of flasks of Chambertin and Clos Vougeot, bade his companions good-night, adding thereto, according to his pleasant wont, the rider, that he dared say Old Nick would have one of the party before morning. The baronet and the captain remained for some time afterwards in the sitting-room drinking burnt brandy—a beverage taken from prudential reasons to counteract the coldness of the stomach caused by drinking French wines: it is true that their Burgundy had been of the strongest—and smoking tobacco, a practice to which his lordship had ever professed a profound distaste, and would never suffer to be indulged in his presence. The trio met the next morning at breakfast, and then Sir Tancred observed that his lordship's countenance showed some signs of disturbance and agitation. From this he was led to infer that the noble peer had passed a bad night; to which Captain Brassgirdle added the conjecture that for once in his life his lordship had been hit hard by t'other bottle. As a corrective, the captain recommended a nip of strong waters, and Lord Brackenbury, after draining a tumbler half-full of brandy, addressed himself in this wise—I am quoting Sir Tancred—to his companions:

"The strangest thing has happened to me, gentlemen,—the oddest, the wildest, the most comical adventure imaginable. After leaving you last night I sat down as usual by my bedside to read a book. 'Twas *Les Pensées de Pascal*, I think.† The night was, you will remember"—it was summer-time—

† It was also noted among the inconsistencies of this strange personage that he was used every night, before retiring to rest, either to read a chapter of some work of theology or philosophy, or to work out to demonstration some one problem in Euclid.

"exceedingly hot. I rose to open the window, and bringing my taper thither, placed it on the sill, and continued reading. The flame began to flicker very much, which amazed me somewhat, as there was not a breath of wind stirring. Anon I heard something as of the fluttering of wings, and raising my eyes from the page I saw—I assure you candidly, on my honour as a nobleman, that I saw—a—"

"A ghost!" exclaimed the baronet and the captain in a breath, and well-nigh breathlessly.

"Well, if 'twere a ghost, 'twas the ghost of a Bird. I saw plainly and distinctly on the sill of the opened casement a White Dove."

"Was that all?"

"No," my lord went on, after a pause; "the bird had a voice, and the voice of a woman; and I heard, as clearly and distinctly as in my heart I am hearing them, now, these words: 'In a year and a day from this time, and at twelve of the clock at night, you will Die; and after Death the Judgment.'"

The baronet and the captain gazed upon the face of Lord Brackenbury as he repeated this fearful prediction. They were both bold, bad men; but their cheeks were blanched, and their hearts shook within them as he spoke. But my lord merely passed his hand over his forehead and resumed:

"Nightmare, of course: a waking dream: indigestion from truffles, and so forth. Conscience, if you will, breaking out of the Little Ease in Newgate, where I have kept the rogue double-ironed this many a year. Egad! we'll hang him at Tyburn for good and all.—Some brandy, there," he called, without any tone of bravado, to his valet; "and we'll drink the White Dove's health."

The two henchmen at his bidding stood up, and made as though to clink their glasses with his, and pledge him; but Sir Tancred Tear-

acres spilt half his brandy over the tablecloth, and Captain Brassgirdle flung his bumper on the floor, and swore a great oath that he meant no disrespect to my lord, but he could not drink the ghost's health.

"I have drunk it, you great simpleton!" said Lord Brackenbury quite cheerfully. He had drained the glass and spilt not a drop. "If anyone had cause to be frightened, 'twas I. It was the French girl's voice I heard, of course."

Both Tearacres and Brassgirdle, his most intimate associates, confidants, and accomplices, knew perfectly well that which others only vaguely suspected and darkly whispered,—that Lord Brackenbury, under false promises of marriage, had seduced Honorée Dessalines; that she had died in giving birth to a dead child; and that her father had died of grief, cursing in his last moments the betrayer of his daughter.

Lord Brackenbury went back to England, and there were grander entertainments and gayer doings than ever in Great Coram-street. But from the date of that midnight adventure at Geneva, the young nobleman's health sensibly declined. His spirits were as calmly buoyant as ever; but physically he was no longer the same Lord Brackenbury. His frame shrunk, his eyes became dim, his cheeks fell into hollows, his complexion grew cadaverous, his voice faded away to a guttural whisper. It was openly reported all over town that Lord Brackenbury was dying. Lady Betty Balmayne said that it was a pity; Miss Cyclops, the Anglo-Dutch heiress, still unmarried, muttered that it served him right; and old Lady Oolibah remarked to the maid who took off her ladyship's false hair, bust, hips, and heels every night, that now was the time for Brackenbury, *de faire une fin*, to make a decent end of it by marrying a lady of mature age, but of undoubted rank and fashion.

And Lord Brackenbury's health grew feebler, but the gaiety of his spirits abated not one jot. He seemed to become wickeder as he became worse. He could not leave the house now; but the mansion in Great Coram-street was peopled by a motley horde of his parasites and quondam fellow roisterers. Foremost among these were of course Sir Tancred Tearacres and Captain Brassgirdle; but thither also came that noted gamester from France, the Marquis de la Pourriture, the great friend of Ferdinand Count Fathom; thither came Squire Cockburn of Mainby; and Jack Diver, the horse-jockey, from Newmarket. These, with Captain Stabb, who killed the German baron on the Pantiles at Tunbridge Wells, in that matter of Kitty Webbtoes; and Lord Uncannyford, a Scots nobleman; and Ned Russet, the player from the theatre in Drury-lane, composed a very pretty party indeed to sit round the deathbed of a peer of the realm. For everyone was agreed that my lord's sickness was mortal—that it was a long lane that had no turning, and that the turning of this noble lane was to be Deadman's Corner. The Reverend Dr. Dosyford left his card and his compliments in Great Coram-street; but Lord Brackenbury sent him out word that he might go hang—a message delivered in a modified form to the ecclesiastic by one of his lordship's varlets in livery. Upon which, Dr. Dosyford (who had now gotten a very snug living near Edgware, the gift of his lordship, who bore him no malice whatever for any dispute they may have had when he, my lord, was in his nonage) went home and laid down the heads of that famous sermon which he subsequently preached with such brilliant success before the Lord Mayor and Aldermen at the church of St. Laurence Grillbars, Eastcheap, and with the text, "Flee from Babylon."

Meanwhile, Lord Brackenbury was growing worse, hourly. His appetite was quite gone, but his thirst was still insatiable; and there were as many flasks of burgundy and champagne and brandy by his bedside as there were physic-phials. The doctors essayed to prevent this interference with their treatment; but Lord Brackenbury bade them go hang, as he had bidden Dr. Dosyford; so they pocketed their fees (paid to them with great regularity every day at noon by my lord's steward), sucked the golden knobs of their bamboo-canapes, shook their heads till a farinaceous halo surrounded their wigs, and opined that it was a very sad case indeed. The sick man refused to be bled, he refused to be blistered, and he would not take physic; he would do nothing but grow worse. The roses had fled from his cheeks now; his face was a ghastly yellow-white, and his lips were livid.

"Tancred," he said to the baronet at noon one day, "I shall die tonight at twelve."

"Nonsense."

"I tell you I shall die. The year and the day will expire at midnight. The ghost will keep her word."

"Hang the ghost!" cried Sir Tancred Tearacres.

"With all my heart"—his heart!—returned Lord Brackenbury; "but the ghost will lay me by the heels, and, after that—give me a bumper of champagne."

He swooned before the wine could be given him. Brandy was poured down his throat, and feathers were burnt under his nose. He revived shortly, and called for cards.

There were those of his kin in town, but they had been driven from his door. "He will die as he has lived," his eldest sister said to Dr. Dosyford, "surrounded by bullies and gamesters and duellists and profligates." The heir to his title

and estates thought that he was an unconscionable time dying.

He lay half-unconscious until twenty minutes before nine o'clock that night, when he seemed to mend somewhat, and even remarked to his valet, a Frenchman, "*Qu'il avait diablement faim.*" The man brought him refreshments, and he ate the wing of a chicken and drank a glass of madeira. There was a superb French clock on a marble console opposite his bed, and on the hands of this clock, whenever he awoke, he had fixed his eyes. But while he was eating the chicken, Sir Tancred Tearacres had slipped into the room, and under pretence of arranging a curtain of the bed, moved the hands of the clock forward precisely one hour.

"What is the time?" asked Lord Brackenbury when he had finished his glass of madeira.

"'Tis ten precisely," Sir Tancred answered.

"Ten o'clock—ten o'clock!" murmured Lord Brackenbury, "and in two hours all will be over."

His boon companions were gathered, by his desire, in the next room, and were there conversing and playing cards. From time to time Sir Tancred Tearacres softly entered the bed-chamber, and, returning, would report that my lord seemed dozing. But at the end of an hour they heard him gasp out "Eleven o'clock!" The French valet was watching by his pillow; but since that morning his lordship had refused to admit any of the doctors to his presence.

Ruffianly and profligate as was the greater part of the company in the adjoining saloon, they were hushed and awed by the neighbourhood of that wicked man in the bed. None of them knew what Sir Tancred Tearacres had done. The valet only was in the secret of his moving the hands of the clock. So for an-

other hour the cards lay untouched, and nor song nor jest was heard. The men continued to drink deeply and silently, looking at one another, and waiting for midnight.

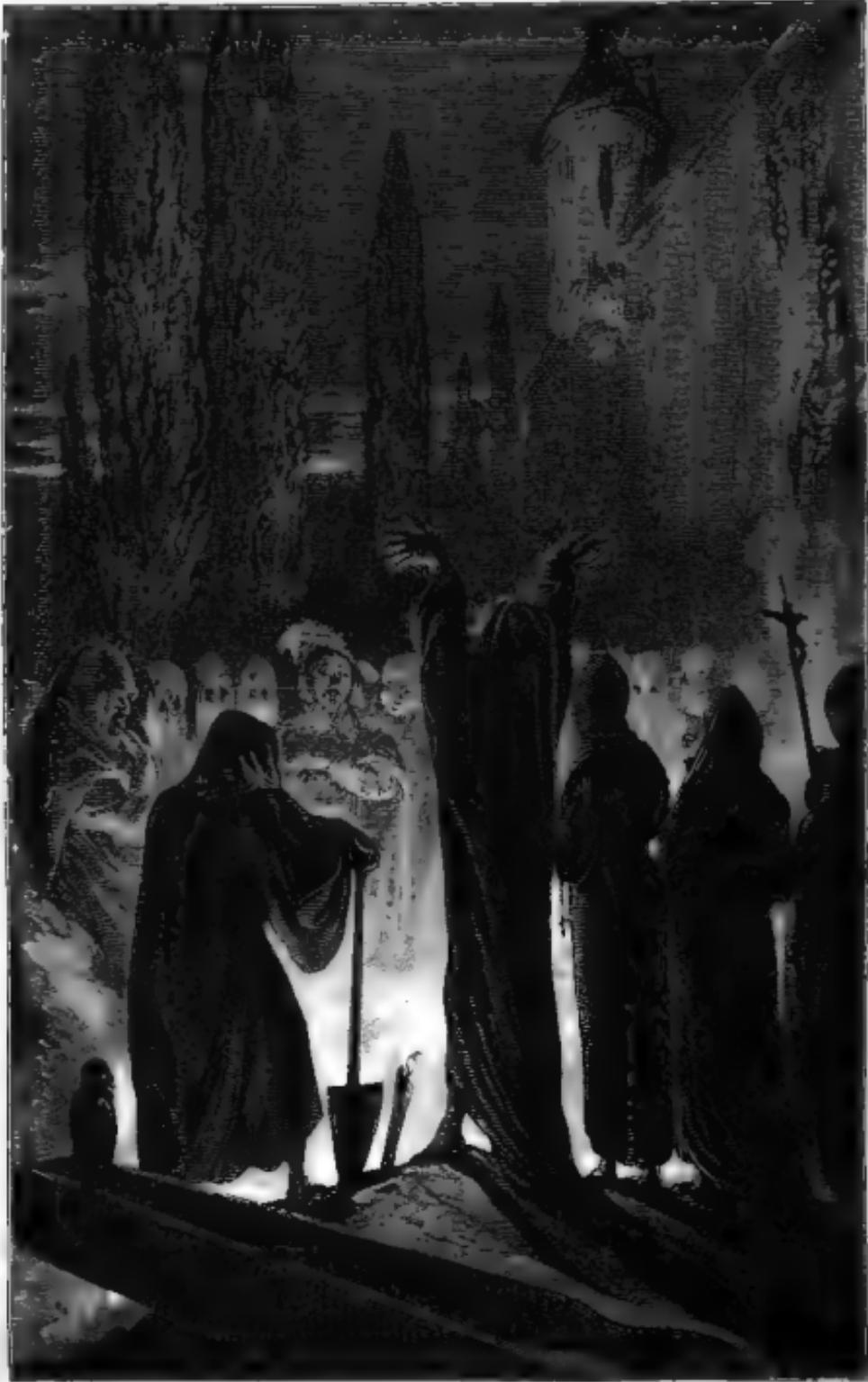
Twelve struck at last from the clock on the marble console. No one stirred. After a minute or two Sir Tancred Tearacres rose, and was entering the bed-chamber, when he was met on the threshold by Lord Brackenbury himself, who had risen and donned a rich dressing-gown of flowered brocade.

He staggered into the room, flung away his nightcap of embroidered silk, brought down his clenched hand on the table with a force that made the glasses ring, and in his own devil-me-care voice cried: "By Jove, I've jockeyed the ghost! It's five minutes past twelve. The ghost is laid in the Red Sea, and we'll make a night of it."

A night was made of it. A mighty bowl of punch was brewed by my lord's valet. Lord Brackenbury was never so gay, so brilliant, so witty, and so wicked as during the fifty-five minutes which followed his declaration of having jockeyed the ghost.

But, just as the French clock on the marble console in the bed-chamber struck the hour of ONE, the young nobleman, who was standing up, glass in hand, drinking some wicked toast, uttered one piercing and appalling shriek—a shriek that rang in the ears of those present for years afterwards. He reeled forward a few paces; the glass fell from his hand and was shattered to fragments, and the Bad Lord Brackenbury fell over on his face on the carpet, dead.

Sir Tancred Tearacres looked at his watch. "The ghost has kept faith," he muttered. He opened the window, and heard the clocks of half-a-dozen churches chiming the last stroke of TWELVE.



A street in Konopack, Ger.

W. L. Thomas, Sc.

"IT IS NO JEST," SAID ONE OF THE HOODED MONKS."

WRAITH-HAUNTED

BY MRS. G. LINNÆUS BANKS, AUTHOR OF "GOD'S PROVIDENCE HOUSE," ETC.

"YES, Helen?"

The speaker, a tall, elegant woman, in whose every lineament beauty yet lingered as if loth to accept from Time his seventy years' notice to quit, looked up interrogatively at her niece, a blooming matron, busy writing invitations for a juvenile party.

"I did not speak, aunt."

"Did you not? Nor you, Mr. Birley?"

Mr. Birley, engrossed in his evening paper, looked up somewhat vaguely.

"Eh, what?"

"Did you call me?"

"What, I? Certainly not."

"Strange!" murmured Mrs. Carson, involuntarily glancing at the ormolu timepiece ere her eyes bent down once more on her interrupted sewing. The fingers pointed to *ten minutes before nine*.

Click, click, went her needle steadily through the seam; Mrs. Birley's pen made a faint sound as it traced the pink paper; and Mr. Birley studied the "share-list" and "markets" with more than ordinary assiduity. A spaniel coiled up on the hearth dozed in a dog's paradise,

in the glow of a ruddy fire, which lit up every corner of the crimson room, and was reflected cheerfully by glass, gilding, and polished furniture.

Presently Mrs. Carson's head was raised again.

"Well?" said she, glancing alternately from niece to nephew.

"What?" questioned both in a breath.

"One of you spoke this time—I heard my name distinctly."

"Indeed, Aunt Marianne, I have not uttered a syllable; I have not lifted my eyes from my desk since you addressed me last."

"Nor I from my newspaper. Mrs. Carson," continued the gentleman, "Dash is snoring most melodiously; possibly you mistook his utterance for mine. Not very complimentary if you did, I must say."

"Indeed I did not," returned she, with more emphasis than the occasion seemed to warrant. "I certainly heard myself called by my Christian name."

"Nonsense, aunt, I am sure no one spoke. You must be dreaming."

Again Mrs. Carson's eyes sought

the timepiece on the mantelshelf : the index had advanced five minutes.

" May be so ; old people do dream sometimes," replied she quietly, resuming her work with a sigh as if to dismiss the subject.

With a light laugh Mrs. Birley dipped her pen into the ink, and Mr. Birley sought his lost paragraph.

Had either husband or wife cared to listen, there might have been heard a beating heart keeping time with the sharp click of the needle and the steady tick of the timepiece. But there was only one listener, and she, seemingly occupied with her needle-work, sat with lips apart and head bent in mute expectancy.

The hall - clock gave warning. With the first stroke of *nine* her work dropped; she grasped the arms of her chair and rose. Her face was blanched and rigid, her brown eyes were wild and wandering. For some moments she stood thus, then with a groan sank nerveless in her seat.

Her companions, alarmed, were by her side in an instant.

" My dear aunt, what is the matter?"

" Are you ill, Mrs. Carson ?" and Mr. Birley as he spoke made a movement towards the bell.

The old lady, recovering, arrested his hand. " Are you sure neither of you spoke to me ?"

" Quite sure," was the simultaneous reply.

" Do you think any of the children called me ?"

" Why, Aunt Marianne, what are you thinking of ?—the children have been in bed two hours."

" Did neither of you hear anything ?"

" I heard nothing."

" Nor I, save the scratching of my own pen and the rustle of James's paper."

Mrs. Carson looked from one to

the other as if incredulity struggled with a foregone conclusion ; then in answer to their inquiries, said seriously, " I distinctly heard my own name, ' Marianne,' called thrice, with an interval of five minutes between each call, although *I saw nothing !*"

" Saw nothing ! Why, what did you expect to see ?" asked Helen, much perplexed.

" Bosh !" muttered Mr. Birley between his teeth as he resumed his seat and study.

" What I expected to see is not easy to say; but I heard a voice I have not heard for thirty-five years. It is a solemn warning."

" Of what, aunt ?"

" Of death !" was the low and measured response.

Mr. Birley laughed outright; his wife fidgeted nervously.

" James," said the old lady, " I know you think me a superstitious old fool, and are laughing in your sleeve at my supernatural forebodings ; but if you have patience to listen to an old woman's story first, I will then tell you what I believe is foreshadowed now—you can laugh afterwards, if so inclined."

Mr. Birley yawned and compared his watch with the clock ; but there was a grave dignity in the speaker's manner which awed him into something like attention. His wife's curiosity was already aroused ; she drew her chair to the fire, and with a gesture and grimace meant to call her spouse to order, said,

" Well, aunt, we are listening."

" Well, Helen, I suppose you know, if James does not, that when your grandfather Denton was in business he was for many years his own traveller; and as there were no railroads, few stage-coaches, and those only on main roads, he used to travel with a horse and gig. On one of his journeys he met at a roadside inn a Mr. Lavery, from Bristol, likewise travelling on his own account, although in a different line.

"The two had met before on the road, but on that occasion he found Mr. Lavery not only invalided but crippled by rheumatism. The women of those days were of a different type from the present generation, and your grandmother was not only an excellent nurse, but possessed a valuable specific for rheumatism; so being a man of impulse, without even a letter to announce his return—for a letter would have been longer on the road than himself—my father brought Mr. Lavery, wrapped up in blankets, to his own house, and placed him under my mother's care. For months the patient remained an invalid guest, tended by my mother, his wife being sent for after awhile.

"Out of these services rendered and accepted grew a very warm friendship, one token of which was Mrs. Lavery's declared inability to dispense with the society of one or other of the Misses Denton. I, however, was the favourite, my visits generally extending over many months.

"I was about two-and-twenty when my last visit to Bristol was made, and—I may say so now without vanity—I was known as the beautiful Miss Denton; perhaps one reason why Mrs. Lavery was so proud to have me with her. Fond of dress and company herself, she was glad to have an attractive companion, and introduced me into much gayer society than my own mother had thought well for her daughters.

"I had been in Bristol nearly nine months, when the first of those peculiar occurrences which have marked my life stamped its indelible impress on my soul and memory.

"Mr. Lavery was away. Mrs. Lavery and myself had been to a card-party, which, as was customary in those days, broke up about ten o'clock. There had been music as well as cards, and I having then a very fine voice—"

"Then! You had a fine voice

when I knew you first, twelve years ago," interrupted Mr. Birley.

"Well, James, perhaps so; but I had a good voice then, and naturally was pressed to exercise it. One of the guests, Mr. Carson, whom I saw that night for the first time, apparently had neither ears nor eyes for anyone else; he seemed literally entranced by my singing, and whispered as much to me as he handed me to my sedan-chair when we left.

"Neither admiration nor adulation was new to me, yet at the one compliment of this young Scotchman I flushed with a strange pleasure such as no flattery had ever called up before. The words lingered in my ears all the while I was carried home; even his peculiar intonation had an unwonted fascination for me; and indeed, when I retired to rest, I found myself still dwelling upon those incidents of the evening in which the handsome Mr. Carson had the most prominent place. I am afraid I answered Mrs. Lavery's remarks somewhat at random, and went to bed with this stranger's parting words floating through my mind as I fell asleep.

"I mention this, my dears, merely to show that there was no possible link of connection between my thoughts and that which followed.

"The bed assigned to me was an old-fashioned four-post, with heavy moreen curtains and full valances, the curtains suspended from brass rings which ran upon iron rods. Mrs. Lavery, in her husband's absence, always slept with me.

"I had been asleep some time, when I suddenly awakened with a start, hearing myself called. I sat up in the bed affrighted. The curtains at the foot were slowly undrawn, the rings jingling as they slipped over the iron rods, and there, in the aperture, distinctly visible in the frosty moonlight, stood the form of my mother in her night-robés. She was

thin, and ghastly white; but a smile of ineffable sweetness parted her wan lips, from which issued slowly the words 'Marianne, Marianne, Marianne!' Raising her hand as if in benediction, she melted away, as it were, into the moonbeams.

"Terror for the moment held me fast. When I recovered my self-possession I roused my bedfellow. She had seen nothing, heard nothing, and was therefore sceptical. In vain she strove, like you, to persuade me I had been dreaming; *the still open curtains refuted that*, for she recollects closing them with her own hand as she got into bed. She then suggested that the maid had played me a trick; but we found the door locked, with the key inside, as we had left it.

'O Mrs. Lavery,' I moaned in an agony of apprehension, 'something is wrong at home—my mother is either ill or in trouble, perhaps dying, and wants me. O, that I had never left her!'

'Now do, my dear child, go to sleep; you have had the nightmare, that is all. It is not much more than a week since you heard from home; all was well then,' said Mrs. Lavery, trying to soothe my distress.

'O, that was ten days ago,' I argued. 'It is a fortnight since the letter was written. What may not have happened since then! I must go home at once.'

"There was no response from my friend; sleep had overpowered her sympathy. Neither my terror nor distress had fully roused her.

"For me there was no more sleep that night. I sat up shivering in bed until the piercing cold compelled me to lie down. I watched the still open curtains and the retreating moonbeams as they marked on the wall the passage of the silent hours; but although my mother's pale face and languid voice haunted my memory, the actual presence came no more.

"Night shadows linger long in December, and I was afraid to rise until daylight, but the first streak of dawn found me astir collecting my scattered possessions; and by the time Mrs. Lavery got up I had almost completed my packing, for I had determined to go home, and knew that the 'Royal Mail' coach would start that very day for Manchester, and, if I missed it, I must wait three days for another.

"Mrs. Lavery's astonishment is not describable; the episode of the night had left no impression on her sleep-bound faculties. She tried raillery, banter, persuasion, to induce me to abandon a 'foolish whim, the offspring of a dream.'

"She changed her tone when the sluggish postman called out to the deaf servant 'a letter for Miss Denton, and a shilling to pay!' in a voice which penetrated to the breakfast-table, and my trembling fingers almost refused to unclasp my purse or break the seal, which however was *not* black.

"Well I remember the tenor of that letter. It told that during my father's absence from home some rollicking fellow with that in his head which was *not* wit had knocked loudly at our door in the middle of the night when all were asleep, and then run off. My mother, always a light sleeper, had started up under the impression that your grandfather had returned unexpectedly, and in her hurry to reach the door before he, in his irritable impatience, should knock a second time, caught her foot in the coverlet and fell heavily against a carved-oak coffer. There she was found in the morning with her collar-bone broken. The fracture was reduced, but she never fairly rallied, and I was summoned home, her symptoms being alarming.

"We were yet discussing these sad tidings when Mr. Carson was announced. He called, he said, not only to inquire after our health, but

to offer his services in conveying either message or package to my friends in Manchester, whither he was then bound. (You need not smile, Helen; it was a common practice at that time to burden travellers with friendly letters and parcels, until their delivery at the journey's end became quite a tax.)

'You have come quite opportunely, Mr. Carson,' Mrs. Lavery answered briskly; 'you will relieve me from a sore dilemma. Miss Denton's mother having met with a severe injury, our young friend is summoned home hastily. She has never travelled alone in her life, and I was debating how I could trust her so far without a guardian. Will you undertake the charge? I know I can rely upon your care.'

"I saw a flush of pleasure light up his clear eye and handsome face as he answered earnestly, 'If Miss Denton will graciously accept my humble services, I shall only be too proud of the trust.'

"In my eagerness to depart I had lost sight of the dangers and discomforts of the long journey to an unprotected girl, but the picture drawn by Mrs. Lavery to deter me from quitting Bristol, as she then thought, needlessly, had made the prospect something formidable. There was no disguising my satisfaction when a protector offered himself so unexpectedly; and if I thanked him quietly, I know it was sufficiently.

"Mr. Carson's place had been booked the day before—outside. He hastened to the coach-office to secure an inside seat for me, and to transfer his own. A fruitless errand; every inside place was already secured. There only remained the hope that some male passenger would surrender his inside seat in favour of a lady.

"A vain hope. The 'insides' were all long-distance passengers, and to a man resented any infringement on

the right of 'number one,' expressing their personal opinions more freely than courteously.

'Mr. Carson,' I whispered, 'do not let there be any altercation on my account' (he was waxing warm). 'I should dread being penned up with those coarse men for two days; I would much rather sit outside with you.'

"An incautious speech, but the grateful look which answered it sent my blood tingling with very shame to my finger-ends. He answered soberly, 'I do prefer the outside in all seasons; but, then, I am hardy. You are not fitted to brave the inclemency of a midwinter frost. Only the urgency of life and death should tempt you to make the experiment.'

'It is the urgency of life and death,' I answered. 'But I am not afraid of a little cold; my pelisse is warm, and my fur tippet protects my chest.'

"I bade my weeping friend 'good-bye.' Without another word Mr. Carson assisted me to mount the movable ladder to a seat at the back which held two, and fronted the guard's solitary post. Just then a messenger, despatched by Mrs. Lavery, came up laden with a rug and shawl.

"With much care Mr. Carson placed the rug beneath my feet, and adjusted the shawl around my knees. I felt at once that I was in good hands, though in my ignorance I considered the precaution unnecessary.

"The leaders' heads were released, the coachman cracked his long whip, the guard blew his horn, a final 'adieu' was said, and I had started on the most momentous journey of my life.

"Rightly judging that my emotions were not less deep because they did no more than well-up into my eyes, my new protector entered into a conversation with the guard to divert his attention, and left me to

my meditations. Sombre enough they were. I could not quit my kind friend without regret; but what weighed heaviest on my heart was the presentiment that my mother was *dead*, and that I had seen her *passing spirit*. More sorrowful and gloomy became my thoughts as one by one the milestones were left behind on the turnpike-road, and notwithstanding my wrappings I began to feel a little chilly.

"I need not weary you with the details of that long and miserable journey, only rendered endurable by the unremitting attention of my protector, for such in truth he was. Not only the scenery, but the weather and temperature varied with the districts through which we rode. From hard black frost we passed to a region where snow lay thick on the distant hills, like a shroud on a dead giant, and in light patches here and there by the roadside or on the trees, which tossed their skeleton arms in the breeze and played at snow-ball with us as the coach swept past. From falling snow we made an advance under a canopy of weeping clouds—first a drizzle, then rain, soaking, persistent, pitiless rain, rain without intermission, rain which would have penetrated a plank.

"No wonder, then, that notwithstanding the plaid which Mr. Carson had stripped from himself to fold round me during the chill of the first evening (using as a substitute, when too late, a horse-rug obtained from an ostler at a fabulous price), no wonder, I say, that several hours before we reached our destination I was drenched to the skin, and utterly worn out both in body and mind.

"When the steaming horses drew the miry coach up before the Bridgewater Arms, I had lain for some time in a state of insensibility on Mr. Carson's shoulder, utterly unconscious of his supporting arm, or of the anathemas vented by the

sympathising guard on the stolid 'insides,' whose victim he clearly considered me to be.

"Uncle Bancroft was fortunately in waiting, for I had to be lifted from the coach-top, and my generous friend was himself too cramped and benumbed to render further assistance. Brandy was poured down my throat, and as soon as a hackney-coach could be found I was conveyed, not to my father's house, but to my uncle's, Mr. Carson never leaving me until I was safe under the roof of my friends and showed some signs of returning animation.

"My shoes, stockings, and upper garments, sodden and saturated, had to be cut from my swollen limbs; but of this I knew nothing, for a fever had supervened and blotted out everything.

"Evasive answers were given to my first inquiries for my mother, as I was too weak to bear the truth; but when I approached convalescence, I was told everything. *She was dead when I commenced my journey—had died on the 23rd of December, close upon midnight.* Her last inquiry had been *for me*. Glancing feebly around from one weeping relative to another, she had said: '*All here? All! all except Marianne. Marianne, Marianne, Marianne!*'

"Helen, there could be no question that my mother's parting spirit had visited my bedside. The impression made was thenceforth ineffaceable."

"The coincidence was certainly remarkable," said Mr. Birley; "still, I incline to think the whole a dream."

"There was something very awful about it, even if it was a dream, you must own that, James," put in his wife.

"It was *no* dream; but my next revelation took place in broad daylight—that could be no dream," said

Mrs. Carson sadly. "I have called my journey momentous, and justly. It influenced my life. My friend in his care for me had sacrificed himself. Hardy as he was, inflammation laid its hot hand upon his chest, held him down, and only let him rise with a spot marked like a target for the shaft of death. Gratitude and pity rose to heart and lips when I first saw his altered face. That journey had indeed fused two souls into one. Whatever impressions our first meeting had made, my sufferings and his self-sacrifice had confirmed. What I had found him during our long and miserable ride I found him ever, and loved him as such large-hearted, self-denying men should be loved. There was no talk of marriage between us for at least eighteen months; but there was no doubt whither we were drifting. Every moment he could spare from business was spent with me; and I think it was principally on my account that he induced his uncle in Glasgow, a muslin manufacturer, to engage a traveller and give him a permanent agency in Manchester, opening a wareroom for the sale of their goods.

"Shortly after that I became his wife, with the full approbation of friends, and with every prospect of happiness. He had furnished for me, simply but well, a house in Hanover-street, then a thorough Scotch colony, and my father's house being in Cannon-street, I was not more than a quarter of a mile from home. As was then the custom, we were married on Sunday, it being likewise my birthday, the 21st of December, and at once took possession of our new abode.

"The twenty-third was signalled by one of the fiercest conflagrations Manchester had known for years. A cotton-mill at Ancoats had taken fire whilst the hands were being dismissed. Some were in the upper-stories at the time; the narrow stair-

case was crowded, and many lives were in danger. Attracted by the glare, Mr. Carson was quickly on the spot, forgetful of all but the duty before him, and to his heroic efforts three girls at least owed their lives. They came to thank him a week later. Alas! where was he? His hair was singed, and so was his coat, from which the tails were dangling loose; he had been wetted through alike with perspiration and water from the engine, but he waited until all danger to others was over, and when he reached home his clothes were apparently dry. He kissed me, apologised for keeping me waiting tea, and sat down to describe the incidents of the fire. Of his own exploits he said little; but on the plea of fatigue excused his sitting down to tea in the plight he then was. After the meal, he dozed off, which I attributed to his recent exertions and the heat of our own fire. It was only on going to rouse him that I discovered his clothes had been wetted, and I was too inexperienced to calculate the consequences.

"The following day I had promised to spend with my father and sisters. William was to join me on closing the warehouse. Being a bride, I was of course an object of special attention, made more of by my relations than at any other period of my life. I found there a perfect levee of aunts and cousins, discussing the bride's cake and future prospects with equal freedom. In the midst of our lively chat time fled fast. There came a sharp rat-tat-tat at the street-door.

"Why, that is William's knock; what brings him from the warehouse so early?" exclaimed I, running to anticipate the servant in opening the door. Without another word than 'Marianne,' strangely spoken, he passed me by, never stopping to kiss me, as was his wont.

"I confess he had spoiled me. I

pouted, petulant tears welled to my eyes, and I lingered with the fastening of the door before I turned round.

'Marianne!'

"He was calling me from behind. I dropped the latch and followed him, as I thought, into the room I had just quitted.

'Where is William?' I asked, looking round but not seeing him.

'He has not come in here.'

'Marianne!'

"The voice seemed to come from the room on the opposite side the hall. I ran thither, anticipating the loving embrace he was too reserved to give before strangers.

"He was not there.

'William, dear, where are you? don't hide from me!'

"There was no answer. I ran into the back parlours,—upstairs,—downstairs, calling his name. *He was nowhere to be seen.*

"By this time the house was in commotion. Sisters and cousins alike had heard the knock, but no one had seen my husband or heard his voice.

"As they looked from me to one another for an explanation of that which is inexplicable, I having protested that Mr. Carson had passed and spoken to me in the hall, a sudden light flashed over and appalled me. I remembered *seeing the hall-panelling through his figure!* With a startling shriek, I rushed bareheaded from the house, tore across Cannon-street, along Sugar-lane, and up Shude-hill, like a mad-woman, nor paused till my grasp was on the handle of my own door.

"That was ajar. A bad omen. I found my beloved husband extended on our bed, a doctor by his side vainly trying to bleed him—*the blood would not flow.*

"Inflammation — the result no doubt of his over-night's wetting and fatigue—had seized him suddenly.

"On his way home he had called

on his doctor, who never left him again in life.

"Before night fell on the earth, the night of Death had fallen on my idolised husband, and my soul was in eclipse.

"Maid, wife, widow in a week, a widow all unconscious of her widowhood. A dumb, dreamy, statuesque automaton. I lived and moved, but that was all.

"I was taken home. When the funeral was over, the house in Hanover-street was given up. I was incapable of managing it.

"In this state I remained until my boy was born. Then the ice at my heart thawed, and tears came to my relief. The babe lived, and I lived for him.

"How I idolised that boy! I watched him night and day with more than a mother's care. He grew up a fine strong youth, the image of his dead father, whose name he bore. His father's uncle would have taken the entire charge of him; but I would not part from Willie, so we were summoned to Glasgow together, and there lived until the death of old Mr. Carson, when Willie was sixteen. The old gentleman left considerable property behind him, much of which was bequeathed to my son.

"Having no ties in Scotland, I came back to the old home, from which two of my sisters had gone away to homes of their own.

"Between myself and his grandfather, Willie stood a fair chance of being spoiled. He grew a tall athletic man, not over-fond of business or study, but much given to all manly sports and pastimes; in which he was encouraged by his grandfather. As for me, I saw no harm in his pursuits, and never dreamed of danger.

"Willie had a friend close by with whom he often put on the gloves, or practised fencing and single-stick.

"One day, towards the close of the

year—my sorrows have always come in the midst of others' rejoicing—I sat reading by the fire; my father was playing his favourite game of backgammon with my sister Sarah; you, then a child of three years, sat nursing a kitten at your mother's feet; she had brought you to spend Christmas with us.

"My father, I must tell you, had then given up business, and our garret was filled with old lumber from the warehouse, several open baskets or 'wiskets' containing waste 'cops,' spindles, and other refuse amongst the rest.

"Our quiet was broken, and the rattling dice drowned by a loud clash and clatter upstairs.

'Someone has left that garret-window open again, and the cats are making fine havoc with those cops, I know; hark how they rattle!'

'Go upstairs, Sally, and shut the window,' said my father, pausing in his game.

"Sarah went. All was still.

"The window is fast enough, and I saw no cats," said she, as she sat down again to the board.

"Again the clash and clatter, as of metal, clear and distinct.

'Helen, do you go up. Take my stick, and rout the intruders out; I'd swear the cats are there.'

"Your mother went, and came back with the same report,—nothing there; all silent.

"Again the selfsame clash and clatter, louder than before. I, haunted by old memories, felt my heart sink.

'Here, Marianne, lass, lend me thy arm; thou and I'll go up and see what all this din's about; but don't thou look so scared.'

"We mounted the first flight, he leaning on my arm. All at once the clatter ceased.

"'Mother, mother, mother!' came floating like a breath down the stairway, and while we paused to listen—for my father heard it also—the

figure of Willie brushed past us, with one hand pressed upon his heart.

"I trembled and grew faint. *I had seen the balustrades through the form.*

"My father chuckled outright. 'Ah, the young dog, so it was Willie playing tricks upon us, after all.'

"I said nothing until I reached the parlour. As I rightly conjectured, no Willie was there.

'Father,' said I, clasping my hands in anguish, 'that was not Willie, it was his wraith. I have been *wraith-haunted* all my life.'

"My father looked dazed; my sisters, perhaps with a good motive, rallied me on my Scottish superstition, much as you have done; but ere their laughter had well subsided, there was an imperative knock at the street-door.

"We were summoned to our neighbour, Mr. Neale's; an accident had befallen my son.

"He lay on a couch pale and bleeding, wounded in the chest, the room in disorder, foils upon the floor. He had barely strength left to press my hand and say, 'Mother, do not weep; Tom could not help it—the button came off his foil. Mother, forgive—' and I was childless.

"I was spared all the agony of the inquest, for there was another long blank in my memory; and during my mental oblivion your grandfather died, borne down by the double sorrow.

"You see, I have good reasons for saying I am wraith-haunted, and for knowing that the voice I heard to-night is a call from the spirit-world to me."

Mr. Birley and his wife both looked perplexed and serious.

"I do remember something about a ghost in grandfather's garret when I was a very little girl. But how is it I was never told of the 'warnings' you think you have had?"

"They were hushed up lest my grief should be reawakened. And now let us go to bed—it is late. The issues of life and death are in higher hands than ours."

The morning broke—clear, sparkling, exhilarating. Mrs. Carson made her appearance in her ordinary health, a little paler, it might be, but that was all.

Mrs. Birley had hesitated whether to issue her invitations, but finally resolved not to disappoint the children, and so they were sent.

The nursery-doors were thrown open, and all hands, big and little, summoned to the task of decoration with evergreens and holly.

In the midst of it all a carrier brought a large box, inscribed, "Aunt Carson's Gift." The old lady had made her purchases the day before. There was a general rush to wrench open the lid, and make a raid on the contents. Books, dolls, workboxes, a desk, toys noisy and noiseless, were there, each labelled with the fortunate recipient's name.Flushed and elated, the youngsters rushed hither and thither displaying their prizes. Frocks and pinafores filled to repletion dropped their contents, until the little ones might be tracked by straggling Shems and Noahs, cups and saucers, whistles and drumsticks.

The box had been removed, the litter cleared away, the stray waifs collected, when Mrs. Carson descended the stairs after her customary nap. A wee round toy, the colour of the stair-carpet, had been overlooked; she stepped upon it, and fell from top to bottom, striking her head against the balustrades.

There was a rush through the house to where she lay stunned on the oilcloth. Reverently and sadly she was carried into the nearest room,—the one occupied overnight. A messenger was sent on horseback for a surgeon and for Mr. Birley.

Shocked beyond measure, the lat-

ter gentleman hastened home in time to hear the fiat pronounced.

"An injured spine—concussion of the brain—no hope whatever."

A physician summoned hastily confirmed the surgeon's decision.

The weeping children were huddled from the room.

"How long may she linger?" was Mr. Birley's question.

"She may go off any moment, the shock to her system is so great; she *may* last two or three hours."

"Do you think she is conscious?"

"I am afraid not."

Mrs. Birley, sobbing, whispered her husband, "James, do you think aunt did hear anything supernatural last night?"

Two days before he would have said, "All bosh!" now he answered, "God only knows! It is most mysterious."

"If she did, she will not die until nine o'clock."

"At nine!" murmured the dying woman; "at nine."

She was evidently conscious, and something more she said, but the words were inaudible. Husband and wife watched the clock as intensely as Mrs. Carson had watched it the night before.

Ten minutes to nine! The retreating pulse quickened under the doctor's touch. The lips moved.

"William!" was faintly audible to the bent ear.

Five minutes to nine! The "change" was perceptible.

"Yes, William!"

There was another pause—a burr—the clock's note of warning. There was a rattle in the throat of the dying woman.

"Coming, William!" was gasped out audibly.

NINE!

A last leap of the pulse—a last flicker of the eyelids—the "call" was obeyed.

Mrs. Carson, wraith-haunted, spirit-summoned, was of the dead!

W. L. Thomas, Jr.

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THE FROST QUEEN'S COURT

BY T. H. S. ESCOTT

WHERE the chilliest moonbeam
shoots its ray,
Far from the realms of the dazzling
day,
Crowned with crystals of glitt'ring
sheen,
She holds her court,—the fair Frost
Queen.

From the river's depth at her birth
she rose,
Silently e'en as the soundless snows,
Bursting the chains of the stagnant
tide,
And Winter smiled as he claimed his
bride.

Her robe of snow-flake, wonderful,
white,
Than the lustre of diamonds gleams
more bright—
Her jewels of ice, yet rarer gems
Ne'er sparkled in monarch's dia-
dems.

Whatever is there, her palace
through,
Moonlit, dazzles with myriad hue,
By Winter 'twas reared: more lu-
minous far
Than mortal dwellings its splendours
are.

Splendour and silence both are
there;
Floats an influence strange through
that chilly air,
Prisoning and deadening the life-
blood's flow
In the earth's glad veins; while, to
and fro,

The courtier elves, a glittering band,
Silently speed their queen's com-
mand:
There's a mystic power in her chill-
ing breath,
For the Frost Queen's life is Nature's
death.

Swift at her word, an icy spell
Seems on each living thing to dwell,
Enthralling the land, entralling the
flood,
Holding in death-like chains the
wood.

She breathes, and the flowers they
cease to grow,—
She breathes, and the mill-stream
fails to flow;
The bosom of earth is in slumber
bound,
There is death above,—there is death
around!

From her palace her subject-sprites
proceed,
Eager the Frost Queen's bidding to
speed,
Decking, as if for funeral rite,
Nature's corpse with their jewels
bright.

On the dry dead branch of the
withered tree
Their crystals they hang all silently;
The lifeless soil, in its shroud of
snow,
They make as with diamond spark
to glow.

And ever through Nature's wintry
night,
Jewelled with splendour, cold and
bright,
Proud in her beauty, chilling in
mien,
She holds her court, — the fair
Frost Queen.

Radiance there is in that palace
fair,
But 'tis not the light of life is there:
There's a mystic spell in the Frost
Queen's breath,—
She breathes, and straight it is
Nature's death.

THROUGH A CRYSTAL

BY R. REECE

I AM a speculative philosopher, something of a magician, and am given to reading the stars. I dare not claim entire originality in my learned processes, but protest against being charged with a blind following of the lore of Lilly, Cornelius Agrippa, and Doctor Dee. I owe nothing to these worthies, not even pleasant reading. My chamber is neither a laboratory nor a museum of scientific horrors. My table is *not* hung with black velvet, and is silent enough for a table nowadays; from an upholsterer's point of view, indeed, it is not worth a "rap." There is neither crucible, crocodile, nor mummy to hand; and at a first glance, the visitor might be excused for questioning my calling as a magician, so "*unhouselled*" am I as regards the furniture of mystery, so utterly bankrupt in the matter of traditional apparatus. Yet none the less am I a conjurer; and the phantoms that I raise "come like shadows, so depart," in the most approved fashion, being seen in all their filmy variety through a crystal.

Mine is a charmed circle, within which only the sacred few may tread. Briefly, and without metaphor, I am a dramatist; and save in the trifling imagery of the crystal as applied to a glass inkstand (which is pretty and pardonable), I have but spoken the literal truth. With eye fixed on that inkstand, I have dreamed dreams, seen visions, drawn them from their vitreous abode and "laid" the ghosts comfortably upon paper. Let my readers be judges of this. Have they never pondered on the fortunes of the Lady Gwendoline?—embalmed for future ages in the leaves of my tragedy in five acts, "*The Pride of Penzance, or the Purloined Parchment.*" Have no

natural tears been shed over the wasting death (through two scenes and a half) of Mabel Sarsnet the Milliner—"Mabel the Mildewed"? The Lady Gwendoline rose up at midnight, before my speculative eye, then intent upon the crystal medium. I saw her, rich, glorified, haughty, petulant; rare vision! But in a moment the glass is blurred as with the vapour of tears. Through the haze I see the Lady Gwendoline yet; but, ah, how changed!—poor, patient, and in a print dress. I caught her to my dramatic heart. I put the fleeting vision upon paper—dressed her in becoming black-and-white—wrote her out; she was read aloud—copied by an infatuated prompter—played divinely by the cleverest of the profession, and you, my reader, went home from the spectacle of the noble martyr's rights and wrongs a sadder, perchance a wiser, man. I owe this to the crystal; for whatever I made of the Lady Gwendoline in after thoughts, I saw her in her "*golden prime*" first in my magic glass.

Yes! my crystal tells me truly. I am a conjurer—a dramatic Katerfelto in spite of myself. For, mark you this, as a proof of the reality of these visions, though my pen transcribed the woes of the Lady Gwendoline and Mabel the Mildewed, though I in fact put them through their stage "paces," so entirely was the conception of these characters due to the crystal, that no one in that crowded playhouse was more innocently surprised and delighted with the novelty of these presentations than I—I, the presumed author! What could I do, then, but render up my rights of success to the magic crystal, and lay my pen reverently beside it, in token of leal homage?

But not alone do these pale faces of injured maidenhood or distressed maternity haunt the charmed glass : — strange grotesque countenances thrust themselves between the milliner and her misery — mopping and mowing and grinning and chuckling and winking. These shadowy heads have red, short-cropped, stubble hair, their eyes are for ever rolling under the most idiotically-arched brows. What do they here ? Shall I bid them avaunt, and retire into the inky lake ? And slight the offerings of my crystal ? Reject these incongruous phantoms conjured up for me and for my use alone ? Never. O bounteous crystal, I take *all* you send ! These chuckle-headed shadows are the comic ingredients of my under-plot ; these red-haired winking ghosts relieve the gloom of my domestic dramas ; and from these ugly types blossom forth in the fulness of time such creations as Roger, in the "Peerage and the Plough" (in seven acts and a prologue), Simon, Joe, and a host of other dramatic countrymen and low-comedy parts, the exponents of which are all endowed with red "scratch"-wigs and the widest mouths. Hitherto my crystal has been described as presenting distinct images to me for future service in drama ; but lo ! another phase. Have my readers ever seen—and, if so, do they remember—a strange pen-and-ink sketch by Thomas Hood entitled *A Dream* ;

a confused mass of lines crossing and involving themselves with others, amidst which appear wild faces, so constructed that the chin of one makes the forehead of another, and so on ? There are times when I am consulting my crystal, that its prisms reflect such another "congeries." Look as I may for one defined outline, I am doomed to the presentment of a continuous phantasmagoria. The loveliest faces are suddenly replaced by scowling, ruffianly masks, or pale, devilish visages. Bright lights flit across the crystal ; and there is a sheen as of gold and jewels. Hues of rainbow variety, never still, but dimpling and repassing, shimmer and tremble on the glass ; all a bright chaos without semblance of order or reason. "Now is the crystal false to you," cries the reader ; "these ghosts were ever slippery ware."

Ah, dear friend, you are unlearned in these enchanted gifts—you know not the bounty of my magic glass. Out of this chaos, the more fecund as it is more unreasonable, is born my brightest child—burlesque ! My crystal is still true, and the faces I see in my oracular mirror come to be realised at length in the airiest of my creations—ephemeral delights of idle minds, but producers of lasting profit to the dramatist.

And all these, and more, I see "through a crystal."

WARNED IN A DREAM

BY T. H. S. ESCOTT

WE were sitting in what was called by courtesy "Mr. Frank's study," but which was in reality the smoking-room of the Vicarage, late at night; three of us — my brother, Frank Mainwaring, my cousin Guy Gervayse, and myself. Guy we had neither of us seen for years; not, I think, since the old days when he used to spend part of his long vacation at Burnley, and helped us to annihilate the game in which my poor father's coverts were rich. Even Frank and I had seldom met of late, for our paths were different; he my father's curate, and I but just returned, bronzed and altered by seven years beneath an Indian sun.

Returned, too, to find the heavy hand of death just closing upon the Vicarage. A telegram waited me at Southampton, bidding me come with all speed, for my father was fast sinking. I was in time, however—just in time to receive his farewell blessing, and to press my lips to the old man's forehead ere it was cold in death. We had only buried him that morning; and on the previous evening we were all of us not a little surprised at receiving a message

from our cousin Guy, who we had thought was in Algeria, saying that he would be with us by ten next morning to follow his uncle's corpse to the grave.

It was one of my father's peculiarities, that during his whole lifetime he had always been singularly reserved on matters of business; but I was very much surprised to hear from Frank that my father had not in the course of his illness given even him, his favourite son, any information as to the position of his affairs. As I have said, the funeral had taken place that morning; but the will had not been found. Drawers and desks had been searched for days, over and over again, but it was nowhere discoverable. That a will existed both my mother and Frank were convinced, from the occasional hints of it which my father had thrown out. Much depended on it; for the living, my father's own, had been long in the family, and there was other property, the disposal of which it could not but seriously affect.

While I had been dressing that very morning, Frank knocked at my

door, and entered the room with the words,

"Arthur, you are so sceptical on all these matters, that you will smile when you hear what I have to say, but, as I live, I saw our father last night. Yes, Arthur, the poor old governor stood by my bedside, just as I have seen him a thousand times, and said to me in a voice that sounded perfectly natural, 'Frank, my dear boy, you want the will; you will find it with my papers of orders. I wished to tell you so the other night, when you were with Arthur in the study; but you were smoking and talking, and I could not interrupt you.' And then," continued Frank, "he said, 'God bless you, my dear, dear son,' just as he used to say every night when I gave him his bed-candle. It was as real as life."

This was Frank's story. During the day, as may be easily imagined, we had had little time to think or talk further of it; but now that the fearful ordeal of the funeral, which we all dreaded so much for my poor mother's sake, was over, our thoughts and conversation had naturally reverted to it, and Frank had only that minute narrated to Guy Gervayse, in precisely the same words which I have given above, the story which he had already told me.

I noticed as he listened that a curious look came over the unreadable countenance of Guy. He said nothing, but there was a strange sort of twitching about his nostrils, and a contraction about his forehead, which plainly indicated that he felt much. Perhaps he puffed away at his pipe a little quicker than usual, but that was all.

I own I was sceptical.

"My dear Frank," I said, "you know we have examined all the documents, and not even the papers of orders are to be found. We have hunted high and low, and no trace of them is visible. I very much

fear that your dream will be purposeless. What say you, Guy?"

But Guy was still silent, only there was the same strange pre-occupied look about his face. Presently Frank threw away the end of his cigar into the midst of the logs which were blazing upon the old-fashioned dogs, lit his candle, and bade us good-night.

He was not a man to say much, was my cousin Guy Gervayse—a curious, impenetrable character—a man who was at all times given to actions rather than words, who had been at most places in the course of his roving life, and who spent his time roaming up and down Europe, and out of Europe, as his fancy took him. We used to be almost afraid of him as boys. There seemed about him a desperate fixity of purpose which was almost cruel. And as I looked that night on the scarred face, and noted the penetrating expression of that cold passionless eye, and saw the man's lips set like steel, I thought that anyone who might happen to cross his purpose would have assuredly a poor time of it.

"Arthur," he said at last, "if I were you, I would renew the search for those papers."

"You think there's something in Frank's story, after all? I scarcely expected to find you a proselyte to the theory of revelation by dreaming."

But Guy was still silent, though his countenance spoke for him and made me anxious to know what his thoughts were.

"I'll tell you a story about a dream, Arthur," he said, after a long pause, cutting the while a cake of Cavendish as an initiatory step towards a new pipe; "a dream which I had once, which didn't end with itself—no, by Heaven!—if you care about hearing it."

The offer was bluntly made, but it betokened an extraordinary degree of communicativeness on Guy's part,

and I was not reluctant to accept it. The man, as I have said, was in some sense an enigma to us all. Whatever he had done, where he had been, were facts which he chose to keep to himself, and on which you would scarcely care to have closely questioned him. But the story of the dream which Guy Gervayse told me now was in no small measure the story of his life. Such as it is, I will relate it, using as much as I can the very words used by Guy himself—and he wasted very few in the narration, that you may be sure of.

"I suppose it was," Guy Gervayse began, "because, poor child, she seemed to need some one whom she could cling to, and who would defend her, that she was attracted towards me in the first. Poor Sibyl! Heaven knows whether she could have been happy with me—she might have been—and the child grew to love me. But it was not to be: you know I've been a good deal amongst the Orientals, and *kismet* is the sum of my creed. Her face—but I'd sooner not think of her face. Well, she should have been my wife, and it might have been a different world to both of us; but there were meddlers. I punished one of them: he'll at least do no more."

"Lorimer was a scoundrel and a coward by nature; he was a favourite with the world, for he had what the world approves of, unlimited wealth. They toadied him at Eton; and when he ought to have been expelled from Oxford, he found some infernal tool, who for a good round sum of money took the whole matter on himself. Perhaps you may have seen the man in town some ten years ago—a huge hulking fellow with an unhealthy countenance, lips full of lust, red-hair, and eyes like a fish. If so, you will remember how mothers and daughters used to run after him because he had eighty thousand a-year. But the man was full of cunning, and was not so easily to be caught. The

first time I had seen him for years was in the Nevilles' drawing-room. He had met them, it seems, abroad—at Florence, I think. I could see at once that the fellow came there because of Sibyl—there was no mistaking that. Neville himself was a spendthrift, and men were beginning to wonder how long he would hold out against the Jews.

"Of course 'twas the old story. Yes, I told the child I loved her; but she could only cry; so I kissed her sweet lips, and she clung to me as if her heart would break.

"‘O Guy,’ she said, ‘they make me marry him.’

"A poor weak fool," continued Guy Gervayse, "I daresay you'll think, to be persuaded. But what is a girl to do against the designing of a shrewd father, and a mother who is the incarnation of cruel cleverness? Mind you, 'tis not with a woman as with a man: the one cannot, the other can, set at naught the command of parents. And they had tried to poison her against me. Perhaps in some measure they had succeeded: but if nothing else did, that parting—how plainly I can see it all, and feel her clinging kisses now!—showed me how much she loved me.

"‘Guy, pity, pity!’ she said. Yes, I did pity her, for I knew the sort of future she might expect with Lorimer. I knew, from the cursed look of venomous jealousy which over-spread his yellow greasy face when he first saw the terms on which I was with the whole family in the drawing-room, how he would watch her footsteps and dog her doings; how there was no trust in that man's love.

"No use to think of that now. They were married, and Neville fully attained his object of freeing his estates from the descendants of Israel. About the same time I went on a long yachting cruise up the Mediterranean, and then in

and about the coast of Palestine. Thought of Sibyl? Yes, poor child, often enough. But what good could that do? I met some men at Corfu, who told me Mrs. Lorimer did not go out a great deal in town, that Lorimer seemed to keep her in to an absurd extent, and that they were now staying at a villa which Lorimer had bought on the Adriatic side of the Italian coast. As I say, I was beating about with no particular object in view, and it was accident as much as anything else which induced me to sail the yacht in that direction on her homeward trip. As luck would have it, we had scarcely got farther than the Calabrian coast when a heavy storm compelled us to put in. A glorious spot, and a perfect natural harbour. The high cliffs, blooming with citron- and orange-trees, were surmounted by a lonely-looking house. I asked its name: 'The villa of the English signor Lorimer.'

"Kismet once more," I whispered to myself. I had not been an hour on land when I met Lorimer. His manner towards me was entirely changed. No trace of suspicion or reserve; his air was that of genuine hearty hospitality. I must come to his villa at once; they were quite alone, and Mrs. Lorimer would be delighted to see me. Well, I went; nor do I know whether I ought to be glad or sorry that I did.

"Poor child! how she trembled when she saw me! how her hand shook! how imploring was the glance of her eye, as if praying me to save her from — what, or whom? I would stay for at least one or two days, would I not? *That* she said when Lorimer had left the room. I noticed that in spite of his effusion of manner towards me, she scarcely dared look at me when he was there. The evening explained his change of demeanour: the brute had taken to brandy. That night I could not

sleep, or if at times I went off into an uneasy and fitful slumber, I fancied I could hear the sound of moaning, which disturbed me, and would, were I other man than I am, have almost terrified me.

"Well, the next day Lorimer had to look at some horses at a distance, and Sibyl walked out into the grounds with me. There was a kind of arbour in one portion of them, almost overhanging a sheer precipice of several hundred feet, a lonely place enough. Beyond and below was the sea, and a little out in the offing was the yacht. Great Heaven, how altered the child was! All the brightness in her eyes had gone out, and I could see as I looked at them that they were red and heavy with recent tears. But I saw more. The breeze blew back a portion of her light sleeve, and there, across her arm, was a livid blue mark as of a blow with a whip. She saw that I had noticed it, and the tears came.

"Arthur, if there is one moment in my life which I have wished to live over again, it is that. She told me everything. 'And now,' she said, 'that he has taken to brandy, I sometimes think in fits of mad jealousy he will kill me. I am sure he would, if he saw me here.' While she was speaking, the child cast a glance of feverish longing upon the Sea Fan, my yacht, in the distance. I knew what it meant — knew that but a word was wanted from me. Great God! what was I to do?" and a look of unutterable anguish came over Guy Gervayse's face. "Had I said that word, it would have ruined her; yet I would now give worlds to have said it. 'O Guy,' she cried piteously, 'who will help me?' And her head dropped upon my shoulder.

"There was a step at this moment on the pathway. It was Lorimer. 'So I have found you, madam:' that was all he said; but the look of fiendish hate and the glare of jealous

rage which came over his bloated countenance I shall not forget.

"Something impelled me not to leave the villa Frontigno that evening. At night Lorimer resumed his former good-humour towards me, and finally drank so deeply that his senses were overpowered. Well, the fellow went to bed, and I to my room. I had not been there a dozen minutes when there was a light tap at my door. It was Sibyl. There she stood, with those long golden tresses floating down over the robe of spotless white. 'Guy,' she said, 'I have stolen away for a minute—he sleeps so heavily now—to implore you to leave here to-morrow. He will kill me if you stay; but, O Guy, could you not be near me?—don't go far.' I took her poor cold hand in mine, and kissed it helplessly; and then she left me.

"What was I to do? How often have I cursed myself for all that I did, and for all that I did not! Well, I determined on leaving, and cruising about the immediately contiguous coast. And now I come to the close of my story—and my dream. Ah, Arthur, that dream!

"We were ten or fifteen miles from the villa Frontigno, and I was asleep in the cabin. But I saw—it makes my blood run cold to think of it—as plainly as my eyes could see, Sibyl, not standing before me, but prostrate, her golden locks streaming over the same white robe in which she had last met my eyes, and the red blood oozing from a gash—a devilish, gaping gash—across those fair features. I could see it as clearly as I see you now. Yes, prostrate indeed lay the body; but there mounted from it a fierce cry for vengeance—blood for blood! I could see more; I could see Lorimer, with the blood on his hand, and the blood on the long Italian knife which he had just sheathed. Yet I was impotent to strike. Even in my dream I could feel the agony of that

impotence. I awoke struggling, with the words 'Blood for blood!' on my lips.

"Well, I wanted to run the Sea Fan ashore; but we had half a gale, and before morning we had been beaten out at least twenty miles farther than we were at night. It was two days before we managed to make the land at the little village close to Lorimer's house. The first thing I heard was that the English signor and signora had left on the previous morning, and that all their servants had gone after them, for England.

"But I could not and would not leave without seeing the place myself. I walked up to the villa, and found it closed at every entrance. There was not a trace of a living soul about it. I was determined to enter it. At last, after walking round the building once or twice, I saw that it was possible to climb up to a window, which I at once recognised as that of my former sleeping-room, by means of a light lattice-trailing, if it could only bear my weight. I got up, I opened the casement, and in a minute I was in the room. At once I found my way to the apartment which I knew to have been that occupied by Lorimer. Everything there bore traces of departure; but there was no disorder, no confusion, nothing to bear out the testimony of my dream.

"Still I was not satisfied, and I resolved to search.

"In one corner of the room stood a ponderous iron-clasped chest, of Italian make, and of great size. It shut with a spring; but I found the secret of it, and threw open the lid. Great God! there was the realisation of my dream; there, in that snowy robe, was the body of Sibyl, with the tangled mass of golden hair; there was the face gashed with the deep wound which I had already seen, discoloured all over with the dark stain that seemed to cry aloud for vengeance.

"From that chamber I departed with the intention of immediately giving the alarm. But my mind was distracted, and I wandered I scarce knew whither, till I found myself immediately in front of the arbour in which Sibyl Lorimer only a few days ago had sat beside me.

"Once more I heard a step, the same step I had already heard there. I turned round and saw Lorimer.

"'Dolt! idiot!' he exclaimed, 'have you come here to meet your death? Do you not think that I watched you enter the house, that I knew you went into that chamber in which she lies dead—dead, and killed with that same instrument which shall deal you too your death?' And I saw him flash the long Italian blade which I had seen once before in my dream.

"I anticipated the movement, and seized his wrist just as he was in the act of striking the blow, else you would scarcely hear me tell you this. There was not a moment to lose. Then came a struggle—a struggle for dear existence. He was a powerful man, and his grip was like iron. We were fast approaching the extremity of the precipice, I on the side of its brink. A moment more, and all would have

been over. His foot slipped, and he fell prostrate. There on the ground lay the knife. I seized it, and—

"No, thank God, the stain of blood is not on my hands. Lorimer rose, but whether it was madness or despair, or whether he felt that I was more than his match, I know not. I looked round; he had disappeared. The man had thrown himself from the brink of the rock, five hundred feet high, into the ocean beneath.

"For the rest—well, never mind about the rest. It was the dream I wanted to tell you about, *apropos* of that business of yours. If I were you, Arthur, as I said before, I would renew the search for those papers in every possible quarter to-morrow."

And Guy Gervayse knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and became silent and impenetrable as ever.

Well, Frank and myself took the advice of our cousin. We did renew the search for the will; what is more, we found it among precisely those papers which were indicated to Frank by his ghostly visitant. As for the truth of these two dreams, I can at least vouch for that of one; and as for the other, Guy Gervayse is not given to romancing.



W. E. Thomas, del.

THE CITY OF THE FORGOTTEN ROOM

P. W. Lehman, del.

BRIERLEY GRANGE

BY ASTLEY H. BALDWIN

CHAPTER I.

"BRING some more toast, Crutchapple, and another dish of broiled ham ; and let Mary poach three or four more turkey's eggs."

Thus spoke an old lady, of venerable and benevolent aspect, to an ancient housekeeper, as silver-haired and smiling as herself.

The party assembled around the Dowager Lady Brierley's hospitable tea-table on this cold winter night were but three in number, including the mistress of the Grange herself. The first was a young and exquisitely fair girl of twenty, whose golden hair fell in wavy masses upon a neck scarcely inferior in whiteness to the swansdown which trimmed the body of her rich blue-silk dress. She was the orphan niece of Lady Brierley, who, having no other living relative, had adopted her as a daughter ; and Rosamond Chester was in every respect worthy of her aged relative's esteem and affection. The third member of this cosy and happy family-party was a very handsome man, of a dark and almost gipsy-like appearance, who was perhaps some three-and-thirty years of age ; and, lest Lady Brierley should be accused by any of our over-particular readers of imprudence, in holding the torch to the tow, by bringing so handsome a young couple into association with each other, it may as well be at once admitted that Arthur Callender was already a rising physician, and the accepted suitor of Miss Chester,—with the full concurrence of Lady Brierley. The worthy old countess was by no

means one of those who think it impossible for real merit to exist without a title ; and as Dr. Callender, besides his own personal good qualities, was possessed of an ample private fortune, Prudence herself could not have sneered at the match.

" You must know, Arthur," continued the countess, as soon as the old housekeeper had left the room to prepare the savoury reinforcements for the tea-table, " that Crutchapple has been almost frightened out of her wits the last two or three nights by the visitation of ghosts or goblins, or some such sort of weird creatures, and that she has made all the maids as foolish as herself, so that they are scared by their own shadows."

It may here be mentioned that Brierley Grange was situated near one of the pleasantest of our beautiful sunny country villages, not more than thirty miles from town, and that Dr. Callender had only that day arrived on a visit to its benevolent owner.

" And," added the countess, " Crutchapple, for all she looks so demure and highly decorous, has, I do verily believe, a firm faith in 'genies' and ghouls, and all that sort of thing. She had positively never read the *Arabian Nights* until a month ago, when she chanced to be laid up for two days, and I lent one of the volumes to her. Can you imagine such a thing as a staid old dame of seventy selecting a fairy-tale to read from a whole heap of all the best authors, past and present ?"

The young doctor smiled, and said,

"O, my dear Lady Brierley, that is the commonest of common occurrences. Contrast is a powerful ingredient in the cup of our bodily pleasures. The boy wishes to be a man, the man sighs over the pleasures of the boy. The dark love the fair" (here he glanced at Rosamond Chester); "the short, the tall; the urchin of four likes to play with grandfather's spectacles; —and why should not poor Mrs. Crutchapple find pleasure in those delightful flights of imagination which have entranced us all in our day, and which she had never read of before? It is the most natural thing in the world."

"Really, learned doctor, you speak like an oracle," Miss Chester said playfully.

Lady Brierley laughed one of the genial cheery laughs of kindly old age, as she said,

"Arthur is right. I confess I did not look at it in that light. Now I think of it, I believe I am a very child myself."

"Especially with regard to cakes, aunty dear," said her niece archly.

"Yes, I confess to a weakness for plum-cake. Well, but with regard to Crutchapple, ever since she first opened the pages of the charming Scheherazade, she has done nothing but question me as to foreign countries, where jewels grow upon trees; did my diamonds grow upon trees, in some outlandish part (so she terms it), and such questions; and I do firmly believe she thinks that Sinbad and Aladdin actually existed, and that it is possible a genie might pop up at any moment in some corner of this very Grange."

Here the trio all laughed merrily in unison, but were obliged to put on decorous faces, as at this moment Crutchapple herself entered, bearing the relays of toast and ham, and looking as stately, and yet withal

as cheerful and benevolent, as Mr. Dickens's Peggotty or Polly Toodles.

"Crutchapple," said the dowager, as she proceeded to dispense the ham, "won't you take a chair, and tell the doctor all about your 'visions'?"

Now Crutchapple, having been nearly fifty years in the service of Lady Brierley, was regarded by that excellent lady more in the light of a friend than a servant, and consequently there was nothing derogatory or *outré* in this invitation.

The housekeeper looked doubtfully at Dr. Callender, who was disposing, with hearty goodwill, of the fine-flavoured York ham and hot toast, but who found time, nevertheless, to look up and say, with an encouraging smile,

"Pray do, Mrs. Crutchapple; I am longing to hear all about it."

Thus urged, Crutchapple said resolutely:

"Well, my lady, I'm sure I have no manner of objection;" and accordingly sat down.

"You must know, my lady, and you, sir, and you, ma'am" (a good servant never says *miss*), "that being troubled this time of year with a cough, I never sleep particular sound of nights, and most times lie awake a good bit after I first go to bed."

"I will give you a cough-mixture," said the doctor.

"Thank you kindly, sir. Well, sir, my lady's hours, you see, are early, and by ten o'clock we're all mostly in bed, and the lights put out. So you see, a few nights ago, after Mr. Rootshawe—that's the butler, sir—had made all safe for the night, and I'd taken my lady her glass of mulled port-wine, why of course I went to my own bedroom. Well, it was bitter cold, you see, and I not being so young as I was, I'd got a bit of fire in my room; not as I hold with fires in a bedroom in general, except for old

folks, that is—asking pardon for saying it—as my lady and me."

"Well, well, Crutchapple," said the dowager; "don't stop to apologise."

"No, my lady. Well, I wasn't special tired, and having a bit of a book, you see, just to finish, I thought as I'd take an hour cosy by the fire before I went to bed."

"Ah, ah, Crutchapple!" interrupted Rosamond Chester; "that was one of your dearly-beloved tales of a genie."

"Well, ma'am," replied the good dame sheepishly, and colouring to the roots of her gray hair, "I won't deny as it were. It were one where Annie (I think they called her) got up in the night, and went into a churchyard."

"Ah, I see,—Amine."

"Yes, ma'am; Amine got up in the night, and went into the churchyard, along with a ghoul; and there them two abominable creatures sat on the tombstones, a-cutting slices out of dead men's bodies, and a-eating of 'em."

"Well but, Mrs. Crutchapple, you don't believe it really happened?" said the doctor.

"Well, I don't know, sir. There's a many wonderful things as happens in foreign parts."

The three listeners could not avoid smiling.

"You may smile, sir, and you too, my lady, and you, ma'am," said the housekeeper, a little discomposed; "but you know, my lady, as my lord himself, when he were alive, told us how his own brother had eaten of a dead man aboard ship, when—"

"Ah, yes, Crutchapple," answered the old lady, shuddering. "But that was when they were famished with hunger; and besides, that was in *real* life."

"Well, my lady, you know best. But as I was saying, this young woman and the ghoul, they sat eating of bodies on the tombstones;

and of course, as I never read, nor heard tell, of such goings on before, I felt goosy-like, you know, and my flesh creeped. But I read on, for somehow the more horrible a thing is to read of, my lady, the more you can't leave it off."

"That is a literal fact," said the doctor; "and it is caused by— But go on, Mrs. Crutchapple, I beg your pardon."

"Well, sir, I read on, till at last —there is no denying it—I fell asleep; and how long I slept I don't know, but I dreamt, O, all sorts of awful things."

"Caused by your uncomfortable position in your chair."

"Till at last I woke; and there was my candle burnt out, and the fire burnt low, but still enough left plainly to see anything by."

"Well?"

"Well, sir, at first I sat awhile, not wishing to move like, as one never does when one's waked from sleep—"

"Another natural phenomenon, which—"

"O, Arthur, do be quiet!" interposed Rosamond Chester.

"So, sir, and my lady, and ma'am," continued the housekeeper, "I just sat a minute or two, looking at the fire, half-scared like, when I heerd a noise, like some one walking in their stocking-feet; and I looked round, and pretty near fainted; for I saw a great big fellow, with a tremenjous black beard, and eyes all wild-like, and I tried to screech out, but I couldn't."

"Nightmare," said the doctor.

"O, no, sir," said the housekeeper earnestly; "I were wide awake, indeed I were."

"But, Crutchapple," said Lady Brierley, "you never told me *this* before."

"No, my lady; I thought as 'twould frighten you, for I believed as it were thieves; but then I saw the man walk quite through the

wall, and then I knew as thieves couldn't do *that*, and I thought as it must be some kind of spirit, and you would all have made game of me. And then"—here she hesitated a little—"I persuaded myself as I'd been dreaming."

"The most rational solution to the mystery," said the doctor, smiling.

"Well, sir, you're put in the room next mine, and there's not another soul but us in that wing; and there's a lot of old mouldy rooms that's not been furnished fresh since my lord died; so if there's any ghosts you'll see 'em as well as me, sir."

"Well, well, Mrs. Crutchapple, I'll take my chance in such good company as yours," replied the doctor good-humouredly.

"Thank you, sir; but I don't fancy the left wing no more; and with my lady's permission, I shall sleep to-night in the right wing, in the room next Miss Chester."

"O, arrange it as you like, Crutchapple," said Lady Brierley; "and don't eat anything too rich or heavy for your supper."

"So I am to face the ghosts alone, then?" interrupted the doctor. "Well, so be it. I will try some spell to banish them.—And, Rose," he added to Miss Chester, "you may as well nail a horseshoe over my door, and order vervain to be strewn over the threshold."

"Well, I'll see about it," the young lady replied laughingly.

Mrs. Crutchapple rose.

"With your leave, my lady, I'll send Mary to take the things away; for I have got to see to the jelly and the pheasant for your supper."

"Do so, then," replied Lady Brierley, with a kind smiling nod of dismissal. And forthwith the good woman departed upon her domestic affairs, not perhaps altogether sorry to escape.

"A nice old lady," said the doc-

tor, when she had left the room, "but I should say decidedly superstitious."

"Yes," answered Lady Brierley. "Crutchapple believes in all the old superstitions, such as that it is unlucky to spill salt, to cut your nails on a Friday, or to see a rabbit run across your path early in the morning."

"And from what you said, I gather that she is not averse to suppers of a savoury nature."

"Why, no. She certainly likes her veal-cutlet, or stewed duck, for the last meal of the day."

"Upon my word," rejoined Doctor Callender, laughing heartily, "I never heard of a more satisfactory recipe for conjuring up ghosts in my life. An old lady eats a rich supper, reads a story full of horrors, and finally falls asleep in a most uncomfortable posture. *Voilà tout!* I think the ghosts are accounted for."

"I think so too," said Rosamond.

"*Et moi aussi,*" added Lady Brierley.

"It is remarkable," said the doctor, "how extremely credulous some old people become on this point, even when they have not been so in their younger days. They are often mere children."

Lady Brierley sighed.

"I think sometimes," she said, "that I should have been happier if I had had children; and yet dear Rose has been all a child could be to me."

Rosamond Chester rose and kissed her.

"Yes," continued the old lady, "it is, perhaps, all for the best. You know, I suppose," she added abruptly, and turning to Doctor Callender, "that there was insanity on my husband's side of the family?"

"No," said the young physician, somewhat startled; "I really did not know it."

"There was indeed," replied Lady Brierley, again sighing. "Even my husband himself was somewhat flighty; and besides, you know, insanity will pass over some members of a family, and reappear in the children."

"Yes, that is true."

"So that although my dear lord was no more than eccentric, the disease might have appeared in its full force in his children, if it had pleased Providence to grant us any."

"Very probable indeed."

"So that all is, no doubt, for the best. Lord Brierley had a nephew (you can just remember him, I dare-say, Rosamond, my dear), a tall, dark, sulky young man."

"Yes, I remember him, aunt."

"Who was continually here," pursued the dowager, "and who, I must say, was exceedingly deferential to both his uncle and myself, until at last he took it into his head to believe that the estates were rightfully his; and from that time Lord Brierley and I had no peace."

"How, my dear Lady Brierley?" asked the doctor.

"Why, he sent us lawyers' letters; he came down, and threatened to take immediate possession; and, in short, behaved so outrageously, that my husband was obliged to take measures to have him shut up in a lunatic asylum."

"Poor fellow!" ejaculated her two listeners.

"Ah, poor fellow indeed! He must be forty-five or so now, if he is alive. That is sixteen years ago."

"But is he alive?" asked Rosamond Chester.

"Nobody knows, my dear. Some short time back he escaped from the asylum, and has not been heard of since."

"Then he must be dead," said Miss Chester.

"Most likely, my dear. Since his body has never been found, it is

my belief that he drowned himself. But let us talk no more on so melancholy a subject."

The three then sat down to a game of cribbage, which was Lady Brierley's especial delight; and thus occupied, passed the time away pleasantly enough, until Mrs. Crutchapple appeared with the roasted pheasant, and the special mould of jelly of her own making.

By half-past ten the lights were all extinguished, and Brierley Grange was wrapped in profound silence.

CHAPTER II.

THE apartment apportioned to Dr. Callender—and to which he was conducted by Rootshawe the butler—was, as before stated, in the left wing of the Grange, and next to that now vacated by poor Mrs. Crutchapple. It was, to all outward appearance, a spacious and comfortable room, apart from the fact of its *isolation*, which would not be deemed a very pleasant circumstance by most persons who have slept in rambling old country houses. In short, the apartments in the left wing of Brierley Grange had been but little used since the death of Lord Brierley, about fifteen years since, and the house-keeper had retained hers from the sheer force of habit, it having been the room which she had occupied when she first entered Brierley Grange as lady's-maid to its mistress, nearly fifty years prior to the date of this story.

Having dismissed his conductor with a few words of thanks, Dr. Callender naturally enough took a survey of his sleeping-chamber. It was one of that description of family apartments which were, and are, very common in the country seats of the nobility and gentry. Lofty, and lined with old tapestry, the walls were hung also with a few family pictures of Lord Brierley's ancestors; and the four-post bed, with its rich but heavy drapings of

dark-red figured velvet, corresponding with the window-curtains, gave a somewhat sombre appearance to the room. But a bright fire, on which were two or three huge logs, burned on the large old-fashioned stone hearth, and shed a cheery glow upon a huge polished oaken wardrobe, which stood up to the wall, exactly opposite the fireplace; the bed itself being on the third side of the room, and opposite the window. The doctor, when in bed, would thus have the window facing him, the wardrobe on his right, and the fireplace on his left-hand side. The visitor thought to himself, as he held up his candle and surveyed his surroundings, that if there were such another wardrobe in Mrs. Crutchapple's adjoining room, her visions of ugly faces might be accounted for otherwise than by attributing them to the influence of nightmare.

The ponderous piece of furniture in *his* room—although handsome, certainly—was almost black with age, and the top of it was carved into strange and curious shapes. Figures of bats' and owls' heads, interspersed with here and there a satyr or a Caliban (together with other heads and busts which forcibly reminded the doctor of Madame Tussaud's phrenological collection of murderers' skulls), might well be supposed to be no pleasant objects to a nervous old lady when seen in the dim light of an expiring fire; and for the matter of that, Arthur Callender himself, in spite of his philosophy, turned away from the contemplation of them with a visible shudder.

It must be admitted that the young doctor did not usually follow the rule which is said to make those who obey its precepts "healthy, wealthy, and wise;" but on this occasion he was tired with his journey, and eleven o'clock had not long struck, when he, like the

other inmates of the Grange, was wrapped in a profound slumber.

He never knew how long he slept, but always supposed it to have been about two o'clock when he was awakened by that vague feeling of intense horror which most of us have, under some sort of circumstances, experienced; the feeling that some terrible danger is near, of the nature of which the disturbed sleeper is ignorant. Even with the bravest men, this awful sensation produces intense fear; the heart beats almost audibly, a cold dew bursts out on the brow, and a cold feeling thrills down the spine. It is a sensation, in short, which none but those who have felt it can in any degree understand. The doctor felt it in all its intensest horror, and, like Mrs. Crutchapple, he felt that to cry out was impossible. Even in this terrible plight, he knew that *this* was not nightmare; and, strange as it may seem, the thought flashed like electric fluid through his brain that the housekeeper had neither suffered from nightmare, nor been fooled by her imagination. Not two minutes had elapsed from the time of Arthur Callender's awaking, when he really believed he should have expired from fright.

He became conscious that some one or some thing was breathing heavily on his neck!

In the next instant, a hand, cold as ice, was laid upon his face, and passed over it, as a blind man manipulates the features of those whom he wishes to identify. It was fortunate for the doctor that he had no power to move or call out, or he might, as the sequel proved, have lost his life. As it was, he had the presence of mind to subdue as much as possible the heaviness of his breathing, though it was not in his power to prevent the beating of his heart being almost as audible as the ticking of a clock; and the

bed on which he lay was literally drenched with the perspiration which poured from him.

But the creature, human or otherwise, seemed satisfied with its investigation, and, to his indescribable relief, the doctor heard it withdraw in the direction of the wardrobe, the footsteps sounding at regular intervals across the floor, until at last a door was heard to shut cautiously.

A door! The doctor had not observed that there was one, other than that he entered by.

Satisfied now that, after all, he had a human creature to deal with, the young doctor's courage (which was natural to him) at once returned, and hastily springing from his bed he struck a light. To throw on his clothes and summon Rootshawe was the work of very few moments. The staid old butler stood aghast at Arthur Callender's revelation.

"Lord, sir," he said, "you must have been a-dreaming."

"Dreaming, Rootshawe? not I!" yet he remembered that he had himself made the same accusation against Mrs. Crutchapple.

"But there isn't no door in that room, sir, that ever I heard on, except the one as you went in at."

"Well, then, I tell you there is one you never heard of. Get on your clothes directly, Rootshawe."

"O Lord, sir, what for?"

"What for! Why, to help me to search those apartments, to be sure."

"Good gracious!" said the butler, as, trembling with cold and fright, he reluctantly slipped one leg out of bed; "there can't be anyone there, sir; there hasn't been no one in those rooms since my lord died."

"Get up, I say, or I'll pour this jug of water over you."

The threat had the desired effect, and in a few moments the aged retainer was dressed.

"Now," said the doctor, "get a strong cord; I have my pocket-pistols here;" and he showed Rootshawe the case containing them.

"Cord! pistols! O dear, sir, what for?"

"Really, Rootshawe," said Arthur Callender, almost losing patience, "you must be an idiot. Don't you see that there is a thief there, and we shall have to secure him?"

"Secure—" But at a threatening look from the doctor the butler vanished, and procured the desired article.

"Now," added the doctor, "take the candle, and come with me;" and he left the room with a firm step, the scared butler following like a veritable Sir Andrew Aguecheek.

Thus they proceeded to the chamber lately tenanted by the doctor. There were no visible signs, that the latter could see, of there having been any visitor to the room whilst he slept. But presently, as his eye fell upon the coverlid of the bed, it was attracted by the glitter of some small object, which, on taking it up, proved to be a common table-knife!

The doctor shuddered. From what unknown danger had he been thus mercifully preserved! Was it intended by the mysterious visitor to murder him? and if so, for what purpose?

"Now, Rootshawe," he said, showing the old domestic the knife, "now do you believe some one has been here?"

"Lord preserve us, Dr. Callender!" replied the trembling butler; "what can this mean?"

"Look at the knife," said the doctor; "is it one of your mistress's?"

Rootshawe eyed it attentively, and then said:

"I really can't say, doctor; those white-handled knives are all alike; but I can count if one is missing."

"No, no, that would answer no purpose now."

"I don't see how no knife could come in this wing, doctor, unless maybe it's the one Mrs. Crutchapple had with her supper-tray last night. I—"

"What! the housekeeper took her supper up *here*?"

"Yes, sir. The next was her room. Mary used to bring her tray up every night, so that she might have it comfortable. She had a partridge last—"

"Never mind about that," said the physician impatiently.

The thought instantly struck him that the "dark tall man" spoken of by Mrs. Crutchapple had entered her room for the purpose of secreting the knife. He was now convinced the good dame had been no more dreaming than himself, and felt more determined than ever to clear up the mystery.

The doctor then proceeded cautiously to examine the walls, and first that by which stood the wardrobe. Just as he expected, concealed behind the old tapestry, *there was a door*, the existence of which was probably, from the long disuse of the left wing, known only to the housekeeper and Lady Brierley, and probably also forgotten by both. Farther examination revealed a second door, by the side of the fireplace, opening from the doctor's chamber into that tenanted until this night by Mrs. Crutchapple.

Arthur Callender had now no doubt that a similar series of concealed doors ran throughout the entire suite of apartments which formed the left wing of the Grange; and so it ultimately proved.

Selecting for the first trial the door which opened from the side of the old wardrobe, the doctor opened it, keeping himself in readiness to use his pistols at a moment's notice if required. It proved, however, after a cautious examination, to be empty, as did the next, and the next, and the next.

"Be careful, sir, for Heaven's sake," said the old butler, "there is only one more room left."

"Ah!" and the doctor cocked one of his pistols. Then with the utmost precaution, he opened the door slowly and peered in.

The room was half full of old mattresses and disused feather-beds, and smelt horribly. Dr. Callender also noticed on the floor some dry crusts of bread, the peel of apples, potatoes, and onions, and a *quite fresh mutton-bone*. Still nothing stirred, and there appeared to be no living tenant of the chamber.

"See," said the doctor in a whisper, pointing to the bone and the crusts.

"Rats," said Rootshawe; "Mrs. Crutchapple's been complaining how they've stole the things of late."

"Rats! don't talk such nonsense. Two-legged rats," returned the doctor. Then in a louder voice: "Is there anyone here? No harm shall be done them."

Not a syllable in reply.

"O Lord, sir, do come away," groaned the butler.

But the doctor advanced boldly to a large heap of mattresses piled up against the farther side of the room.

As he did so, a man sprang from behind them, and with a yell like that of a baffled wild-beast, threw himself upon Arthur Callender.

So sudden was the attack, that the doctor and his assailant fell together on the floor, and a fearful contest ensued, in which the young physician would certainly have lost his life, but for the prompt and unexpectedly able aid of Rootshawe. The old man seemed suddenly to throw aside his cowardice and regain the courage of his youth; and after a desperate struggle between the three men, the nocturnal visitor was at last, thanks to the doctor's foresight in procuring a rope, secured.

Wiping the blood from his face, Doctor Callender looked fixedly at his prisoner, and it scarcely needed his professional experience to tell him that he beheld a *madman!* The large, wild, dark eyes, the shaggy masses of unkempt hair, the hollow cheeks, prominent teeth, and foam-specked lips, rendered the unfortunate being, who thus lay bound before his captors, a ghastly object to behold.

A new light burst upon the startled physician's brain. *The late Lord Brierley's lunatic nephew!*

And so indeed it proved. The unhappy man, possessed with the idea that he was the lawful master of Brierley Grange, had, on his escape from the lunatic asylum, proceeded hither by night. Well acquainted with all the secret passages of the house, from his familiarity with it in boyhood, he had, with all the cunning of a lunatic, secreted himself in the disused suite of chambers in the left wing, whence it was easy, owing to the early-retiring habits of the family, to steal out at night and procure food, depredations which had been laid by good Mrs. Crutchapple to the charge of the

rats. Not being aware of the death of Lord Brierley, and conceiving (by some subtle chain of madman's reasoning) that were he dead, he, the lunatic, would come into possession of what he deemed his rights, he had secreted, from the housekeeper's supper-tray in the adjoining room, a table-knife, with which it was his design to murder Lord Brierley as he slept. It should here be remarked that the chamber used by the doctor had been that of Lord and Lady Brierley during the lifetime of the former, as was well known to the lunatic.

The unfortunate man had, on passing his hand over the features of Arthur Callender, discovered, with a madman's quickness of perception, that the occupant of the bed was not his intended victim; and to this momentary glimmering of reason in an obscured brain, the young doctor owed his providential escape.

The rest may be safely left to the reader's imagination. The poor fellow was, of course, put under safe though kind restraint; but he did not long survive the date of the solution of the Mystery of Brierley Grange.



H. K. Browne, del.

Edmund Evans, sc.

"**SO SAYING, HE JUREW DOWN THE HILL ON THE GROUND.**"

SILBURY HILL

[Close to the London road, about midway between Devizes and Marlborough, stands Silbury Hill, well known to antiquaries as the largest tumulus, or barrow, in the United Kingdom. It is nearly one-third of a mile round at its base, and its perpendicular height is upwards of a hundred feet. Its origin, of course, is shrouded in mystery. Modern archaeology assigns it to the Druidical or Stone Age, and by some professors it is believed to be the tomb of an ancient British king. When, however, it was excavated a few years since, nothing was found to justify such an assumption. It therefore only remains to fall back on tradition, which supplies the following authentic story—at least so far authentic that no one can contradict it.]

A Legend of Silbury Hill.

In the county of Wilts there's a town called Devizes;

When you've once heard the name you will know it again,
Because 'tis the town where they hold the assizes,

And stands near the borders of Salisbury Plain.

Besides, 'tis well known, That Devizes alone
In the world has no double—Yorks, Londons, and Parises,
New and old, may be found thick as Smiths, Browns, or Harrises ;
But all the world over (at least, so I'm told) one
Devizes there is, and that one is the old one.

How old it may be, I really can't see
How one is to find out, since accounts disagree.
Some savans pronounce it as old as Methusalem,
Others say it was built the same year as Jerusalem ;
But, how'er they may differ, they all are agreed
That Devizes must be very ancient indeed.

It therefore is clear, That whatever the year,
In which the events of my story befell,
'Twas a long time ago, though how long I can't tell.
It's very well known that the town of Devizes,
Long before good King Alfred made sessions and 'sizes,
Was a stout little borough, well able to play
A prominent game in the wars of the day.
Whoever its foes, it did not care a button—

To borrow a phrase from the British P. R.,
Describing a pugilist clever at spar-
Ring—the town at a fight was a regular glutton.
The people of Marlborough—sixteen miles off—
At Devizes had rashly adventured to scoff :
'Twas a very rash act, because everyone knows

That more often than not, When people get hot,
High language is speedily followed by blows.
So Marlborough discovered, and that pretty quick,
That its stout little neighbour was up to a trick,
Or two, for that matter, at fightin' ; for bitin'

(Watts' logic, of course, being not then in force)
 The folk of Devizes took special delight in.
 It needs scarcely be told, being patent to all,
 That Marlborough, the weakest, soon went to the wall.
 Having suffered defeat, but on mischief intent,
 A messenger promptly to Hades was sent
 To seek help from a person best known as Old Nick,
 Who asked, "What's the row?" bade the man cut his stick.

Tell his friends he'd be there; Took flight through the air;
 And so fast through the ether his flapping wings bore him,
 When the man got to Marlborough, he found Nick before him.

The men of the place Having stated their case,
 Nick laughed till his highness got black in the face;
 Said he'd do their job, and before they could ask
 How he meant to proceed, set to work at his task.
 He picked up a hill, clapped it up on his shoulders
 (To the wonder and terror of all the beholders),
 Stalked out of the town, quick as thought, with his load,
 And set out for Devizes along the high-road;
 Meaning, when he got there, to demolish the town
 With the hill that he carried, by clapping it down.
 The hill was the size, as he judged, to a shade,

And before set of sun The job would be done,
 Ere a man of Devizes could halloo for aid.
 The town had been smothered for ever and aye,
 If Saint John had not chanced to be passing that day.

When he heard what was doing, What mischief was brewing,
 He set out for Devizes, and ran the whole way
 As saints only can run; that is, devils can go
 Pretty fast as a rule, though when loaded they're slow.
 The moment he got there, he shouted, "Quick! quick!
 For your lives, get a sack! You'll be smashed by Old Nick.
 Bring all your old boots; fetch a suit of old clothes;
 Call the oldest inhabitant—some one who knows
 How to tell a good fib. In so holy a cause
 As to save a whole town from the enemy's claws
 'Tis perfectly legal; indeed, I would do it,
 But Nick knows me too well, he'd be sure to see through it."

Like good children, they did Just what they were bid.
 The saint filled the bag to the mouth with old boots,
 While the old man looked out for the worst of the suits
 That they brought, put it on, and was off in a trice,
 While the saint in his ear gave this parting advice:
 "Now then, my old friend, look alive; take this pack
 Of old boots and shoes; put it up on your back;
 Walk six miles an hour on the Marlborough road
 Till you meet a black man with no end of a load.
 Stop and ask him the time, and be sure you are civil,
 'Tis better to keep on good terms with the Devil.
 If you find him disposed to be friendly, then say
 What I told you just now, in a casual way;

You must do it with ease, For there'll be, if Nick sees
 That you're trying to come it, the devil to pay."

The old man was a 'cute one, and knew what was what,
Though he didn't much relish the job he had got;

But he'd plenty of pluck, And he thought, "If I've luck,
I may sell the old gentleman, rescue the town,
And, when all's said and done, if they do not come down
With something that's handsome, I'm vastly mistaken;
They ought to reward me for saving their bacon."

So now the old man on his mission is gone,
Let us leave him, and see how the Devil got on.
Before he had travelled six miles on the road,
Nick found that the hill was so awful a load,
That he wished it—it really is hard to say where—
At the Devil perhaps, if it hadn't been there
Already, of which he was fully aware.

For what with his corns And the weight on his horns,
If he travelled by road, or took flight through the air,
'Twas equally awkward; and had it not been
For the promise he made, he'd have fled from the scene;

But he wouldn't for shame: So, though awfully lame
From a very hard corn on the point of his toe,
Yet thinking he hasn't much farther to go,
He limps along gamely, as quick as he can,
Till close to Beckhampton he meets the old man.
The Devil, despairing of reaching the town
Before night, by the roadside has sat himself down
To rest his sore hoofs, for his boots hurt his feet.
(That he mightn't alarm anyone he should meet,
He'd thought it but right, to preserve his *incog.*,
To wear boots and a hat, though he felt them a clog;
While as to his tail, lest the world it should shock, it
Was tied in a bow, and tucked into his pocket.)

Not long has he sat When he sees, pit-a-pat,
Coming by an old man in a shocking bad hat,
And a suit not adapted for winterly weather.

For 'twas just the same sort That some Irishmen sport,
i.e. made of nothing but holes sewed together.
Nick looked at the man, and the man looked at him,
Put his hand to his head, touching just where the rim
Of the hat would have been, were it still in its prime,
And said, "Please, your reverence, to tell me the time!"
The Devil was sulky, and didn't reply
For a second or two, till the man had got by,
When it suddenly struck him, "I'm going the way
That he came, and 'tis getting quite late in the day;
Perhaps he might tell me—he's certain to know—
How far I have come, and how far I've to go."
So he shouted, "I say! Here, old fellow, come back!"
The old man turned round, and was there in a crack.

Said Nick, "I beg pardon, The job is a hard one
That I've taken in hand, and it bothered me so
I forgot my good manners. I'd have you to know
I'm a plain-spoken man; But I like, when I can,

To be civil to those who are civil to me;
 That's just how it is, my old friend, don't you see?
 The question you asked me, before you went past,
 Was to tell you the time; well, my watch is too fast
 By three hours and a quarter: by me it's just nine.
 I've answered your question, now you answer mine.
 You come from Devizes, I'll venture to say:
 If I'm quick, do you think I might walk there to-day?"
 The old man looked at him with well-feigned surprise,
 He opened his mouth and he turned up his eyes;
 At length he found words: "My dear sir, are you mad?
 I set out from Devizes when I was a lad—
 At least, a young man—and a nice walk I've had.
 You wouldn't believe it, but yet it is true,
 These clothes that I wear when I started were new;
 While as to shoe-leather, I've bought, I should say,
 A couple of hundred new pairs on my way.
 If you like, you can count 'em; I've got 'em all here
 To be mended, or soon I shall have none to wear."
 While thus he was talking he set down his load,
 And shot out his pile of old shoes in the road.
 To say that the Devil was taken aback
 Would be very mild language; he looked quite as black
 As he's painted. He shouted, "You rogue, it's a lie!"
 "It's true," said the man; "you're quite welcome to try.
 I've come along well, for my load is but small,
 But it's doubtful to me, With the weight that I see
 On your shoulders, if ever you get there at all."
 Nick couldn't stand that: he was slow at believing,
 But the old man was such an adept at deceiving,
 And stuck to his story through thick and through thin
 With so truthful an air, That, strange to declare,
 For once in his lifetime Old Scratch was "sucked in."
 Said he, "If that's so, No farther I'll go!
 I've been here too long, and they'll want me below.
 Get out of the way! Now, old fellow, stand clear,
 Or I'll send you away with a flea in your ear."
 So saying, he threw down the hill on the ground
 By the side of the road, and so loud was the sound
 It made when it fell (As the chroniclers tell)
 That it very near sent the old man into fits:
 Indeed, the concussion so muddled his wits
 That he set off like lightning the way that he came,
 While the Devil went off in a burst of blue flame;
 And before he had fairly got over his fright
 The hill and the Devil were both out of sight.



Thomas Gray, del.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MERE.

W. A. Cranston, sc.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MERE

'Tis the eve when the whitest snow lies on the wold,
When the moon's smile is weirdest in pale tints of gold ;
I know the pine-music, it rings on the ear
From the moonlighted margin of moorland and mere.
'Tis the feast of the Yule-tide, the birth of the Christ,
And I sadly fare forth to the mere to keep tryst.

But in vain I go forth when the woodland is still,
And I climb up the breast of the desolate hill ;
The mere sleeps all silent, no voice on the air
From my sweet spirit-love comes to welcome me there.
The touch of earth's passion has been, and in vain
I call ; but no White Lady answers again.

O phantom, too faithful for false heart like mine,
Was the love not enough that was almost divine ?
I had all love could give, in your stooping so low
To a mortal, in passion as pure as the snow.
O tender Eidolon, come back, and forget
The falsehood that leaves me your worshipper yet.

That love born of earth, she was sweet too, I swear,
When the wind stirred the tress of her amorous hair ;
Her soft arms enwound me, the snows of her breast
A king in his splendour might gladly have prest ;
And I yielded, I loved. Then the old hope was o'er,
And the White Lady's presence was lost evermore.

Must I say how my earth-love was false, how she sold
My love like a wanton, my honour for gold ?
Her kiss should have stung me e'er seeming so sweet,
It lured me from thee to lie low at her feet.
Just one brief hour of passion, of sin, and the dream
Slipt away as the dead leaf slides down on the stream.

And still, as the Yule-tide comes round, I must go,
With the chimes of the midnight abroad on the snow ;
And I watch for the White Lady, hoping once more
She may come and keep tryst as in winters of yore.
But the pine-music mocks me, no spirit comes near ;
And the vainest of vigils I keep by the mere.

H. SAVILE CLARKE.



H. D. Friston, Jr.

Edmund Evans, sc.

"HIS EYES WERE WIDE OPEN, AND TURNED FULL ON THE DOOR."

EJECTED BY A GHOST

BY JOHN PITMAN

I HAD taken my chambers in Gray's-inn-square, and was inclined to like them. They were on the second-floor, and consisted of three rooms. The door on the landing opened on to a narrow passage, at the end of which, on the right, was the door of the sitting-room, the three windows of which looked on to a dingy green expanse, where stood a few tall gaunt London trees. In one corner of the sitting-room was a door leading into the bedroom, which communicated with a dressing-room. This dressing-room had a door leading into the end of the passage, to the left of the main entrance from the landing. Thus I could make the complete circuit of my premises: from the sitting-room, through the bed- and dressing-rooms into the passage, and through the passage into the sitting-room again. I am anxious to be understood on this point, as a realisation of the topography of the place is necessary for the comprehension of the incidents I have to relate.

I will premise by assuring my reader that at the time of which I am speaking I was in thorough physical health. As is the case with most sucking barristers, I rather prided myself on cultivating a habit of mind that should not permit me to be unduly impressed by causes unwarranted by calm reflection. I had been accustomed to a sedentary, to some extent a solitary, life, and in moving to Gray's-inn-square had determined to apply myself unremittingly to legal studies.

My new chambers had been un-

occupied for some months, and after making sure that they had been well cleaned and scrubbed, I sent in my furniture, and took possession. It was on a chill dark October evening that, after dining at an accustomed eating-house, I wended my way to my new quarters. I shall never forget that evening: there was a heavy clammy feeling in the air of the streets; and as I turned into the dreary square the air seemed heavier and clammier. On arriving at my chambers, I found the deaf spirit-sodden old creature who had attached herself to me as laundress and charwoman in the act of setting out the tea-things. The lamp was lighted, and a bright fire burned in the grate. On my coming in, the old woman mumbled a few words, the meaning of which I did not catch; however, well pleased with the air of comfort she had imparted to the place, I wished her a cheery good-night as she went out.

Having closed and locked the outer door, I returned down the passage into the sitting-room. I can perfectly call to mind its appearance on that night. The polished furniture was gleaming and glistening in the light, the windows were veiled by thick curtains, and the door leading into the bedroom stood ajar. I congratulated myself on my possessions, and having poured myself out a cup of tea, and lighted my pipe, settled myself with a volume of Hallam in an arm-chair by the fire. I had been reading for some time, my attention had somewhat wandered to a vague sleepy con-

sideration of matters not strictly relevant to constitutional history, when I became aware of a strange all-pervading sensation of cold. The sensation was so sudden, so acute, that I rose from my chair shivering, in the expectation of finding one of the windows open. But no; they were all closed and fastened. Through the panes I could discern the gaunt branches of the trees, unstirred by any gust of wind. On glancing round the room, I noticed the flame of the lamp, which, though somewhat dim, did not flicker or seem agitated by the icy stream of air which chilled me to the bones. The bedroom door, as I have mentioned, was ajar; and thinking the draught might proceed from one of the inner rooms, I lighted a candle, with the intention of looking through them. But the instant I entered the bedroom the candle went out; not suddenly, as from a current of air, but quietly, instantaneously, as though it had been introduced into an atmosphere of carbonic-acid gas. At the same moment the sensation of cold again came over me with ten times greater intensity than before. The gaslight in the square shone feebly into the rooms, and I was able to find my way through them into the passage, and back into the sitting-room. My sensations appeared to me somewhat unaccountable; but attributing them to some draught, of which I could ascertain the cause in the morning, I closed the doors and resumed my place by the fire. After a little while I fell again into my interrupted train of dreamy thought, and gradually fell asleep. Now, before proceeding further, I may state that I had never been a victim to nervous fancies. Nothing had ever occurred to me bearing in the remotest way on the events I am about to relate,—events so utterly inexplicable by natural causes, and yet so fantastically real, that even after a lapse of

many years I call them to mind with a shudder of horror.

I remember, as though it were yesterday, the appearance of the room as I mused lazily in my arm-chair before going to sleep. The sound of an organ, which was playing in some neighbouring street, came to me fitfully, at times seeming to be almost close to me, at times, again, seeming to proceed from some great distance. The fire had burned low, occasionally crackling and ticking; the lamp, as I have mentioned, was burning dimly, and a large portion of the room was in deep shadow. I do not know how long I had slept, when I became conscious of my own being. I cannot say that I awakened; for though all my mental faculties were struggling painfully into life, my vital action seemed suspended, and I was unable to move hand or foot. A cold perspiration burst from all my pores as I made tremendous but vain efforts to shake off the incubus that was upon me. My feeling was not one of impotence: it was as though I had been frozen into a solid block of ice. I endeavoured to call out; I had no power over my voice, and could not utter a sound. But as I gasped and panted, there stole into my nostrils a deadly, terrible, overpowering stench, unmistakable in its penetrating sickness to me who had frequented hospitals. It was the dread odour of decomposing mortality that was suffocating me as I sat. I felt that I must break the spell, or die. With one terrific exertion that strained every nerve and muscle, I burst from the chair, and fell cowering on my knees before the fire. The lamp had gone out, a faint gleam from the fire afforded the only light in the room. I relighted the lamp, and having swallowed a glass of brandy, endeavoured to collect my thoughts. My first idea was, that a dead body must be somewhere

concealed in the room. The hideous odour still clung to my nostrils, and the absurdity of such a supposition did not strike me. I searched the room, but of course found nothing; though, to my astonishment, the bedroom door, which I had carefully closed, was wide open. As I advanced towards it with the intention of shutting it again, my lamp was extinguished in the same unaccountable manner as before; I locked it, however, securely, and again struck a light.

By this time I had sufficiently recovered to endeavour to reconcile my sensations to natural causes, or at any rate to a formidable attack of nightmare. I lighted my pipe, in the hope of neutralising the terrible stench that still pervaded the room. Leaning on the mantelpiece, I actually smiled at beholding my own pale scared-looking face in the mirror. As I looked, suddenly every pulse in my body stood still. I beheld the reflection of the bedroom door, which gradually, noiselessly, opened of itself. I tried to command myself, and turned round towards the door. The same intense thrill of cold, but not a soul was there. I considered for an instant, and cross-examined myself as to my own condition. It was evident that my nerves were completely unstrung, and I decided, as I saw reflected in the looking-glass my own ghastly-looking face, that I was not in a condition to investigate the matter any further for that night. A dread was upon me that I could not shake off; so, hastily putting on my great-coat and hat, I hurried out of the room, through the passage, found myself on the landing with a sigh of relief, and locking the outer door, walked to the rooms of a friend who lived in the neighbourhood.

S—, who was reading for the Indian Civil Service, was glad to see me, and offered me a shake-down for the night. I informed him at once of

the cause of my ignominious flight from my own rooms. My experiences had been too unmistakably real for me to dread ridicule in the relation of them. So, confessing unreservedly that I had been almost frightened out of my wits, I sat patiently enough as he endeavoured to prove satisfactorily that my sensations were entirely due to nerves or indigestion. Before retiring to rest, however, we agreed to spend the following night together in my chambers. In the morning we each went to our respective duties, with an arrangement to meet at dinner in the evening. I did not call at Gray's-inn-square during the day; and what with attending to lectures and reading tough law, had not only overcome any idea of supernatural agency in the events of the preceding night, but, as the evening drew near, entirely ceased to think of the matter.

It was about eight o'clock as we entered the rooms together. The old laundress had evidently been at work, as on the preceding evening. The fire was burning brightly, the lamp was lighted, and the tea-things were set out on the table. We walked through the rooms, and found everything in perfect order. S— laughingly envied me my comfortable quarters, showing by his manner that he was more than ever convinced I had been the victim of an exceedingly bad attack of nightmare. After a little while we agreed to play at chess, and arranged a small side-table in front of the fire. I sat in the arm-chair with my back to the bedroom-door, as on the previous night; S— was seated opposite to me, consequently facing the door, which I had closed, locked, and bolted, on completing our tour of inspection; S—, who was in high spirits, joking at me the while. I remembered, however, the uncomfortable tendency it had to open on its own account, and determined

that it should be as securely fastened as a good lock and bolt would admit of. We were both fair chess-players, about equally matched.

Two hours, perhaps, had elapsed, when the interest of the game culminated, and we were considering it with an intentness known only to chess-players. The move was with me. Knowing it to be a critical one, I was considering it at length, in all its aspects; my decision was just formed, and I was on the point of moving a piece, when gradually, surely, I became aware of the same extraordinary sensation of cold as on the night before, just as if the surrounding atmosphere were becoming iced into solidity. I felt that the bedroom-door behind me was opening. I looked up with the intention of calling S—'s attention to the phenomenon, but my movement was unnecessary; he was equally conscious of it with myself. He had risen from his chair, and I can never forget the expression of his face, which was livid and distorted. His eyes were wide open, and turned full on the door that was behind my chair. All his features were convulsed, and his appearance, as he bent forward, as if in an intensity of horrified expectation, was perfectly terrific. I actually saw his hair lift from his head, and the great beads of perspiration burst from his forehead. He took not the slightest notice of my movement, but slowly raised one hand, as if pointing to something in the room behind me; then suddenly, and without giving me a moment's warning, with one loud yell of agonised terror, he dashed to the door leading into the passage, through the passage, and out of the main door, which slammed heavily behind him. I hurried after him into the passage. Then I remembered that the outer door closed with a spring-lock, and that the key was in the pocket of my greatcoat, which was hung up in the bedroom.

We had inadvertently left the door open on coming in, and thus S—had been enabled to escape. It would be impossible for me to describe my feelings at finding myself alone in the passage. How long it was before I mustered up sufficient presence of mind for reflection I cannot tell, but at last I realised to myself the fact that to leave my chambers it was necessary to get the key. With a desperate courage, I returned to the sitting-room. The lamp was extinguished; the fire was burning with a sickly glare. With closed eyes I advanced into the bedroom. I quickly felt my way to the peg on which my coat was hanging, when something happened that caused my very heart to stand still, and my blood to freeze. I heard a movement in the passage,—a strange, heavy, shuffling sound, as of a body dragging itself along the floor. An impulse seized me, unaccountable as all the other events of that memorable night. I felt impelled to follow *the thing* that was painfully, slowly dragging itself down the passage. I stepped through the dressing-room; and as I moved, I heard it move on before me, keeping at the same relative distance from me. I quickened my pace, I ran; but still I could not overtake that which I still heard dragging itself along.

After three or four headlong rushes from room to room, I stopped in the middle of the sitting-room to recover breath. As I stood, a revulsion of feeling came over me. My eagerness to confront and discover the cause of the sounds I still could hear gave way to horror. I felt my life and reason to depend on my escape. As I moved to the bedroom-door, it closed in my face. I frantically endeavoured to force the lock. The *thing* was dragging itself along the passage into the room in which I was. Again the nauseating stench of the night before rose into my nostrils; I rushed

to the window with the intention of throwing it open and jumping into the space beneath; but it was too late. I turned my eyes downwards. It was close to me, and I beheld it. A man writhing on the floor, his features blue, bloated, and decomposed, the eyeballs turned up, yet bearing full upon me, dead and glassy, an impure phosphorescent light emanating from the body itself. As I gazed, one discoloured hand was raised to the throat, in which I perceived a hideous gash. It drew itself gradually closer to me. I became insensible. When I was discovered in the morning, my friends, who were te-

legraphed for, removed me to the country, where, amongst cheerful scenes and people, I soon recovered. S—— died of brain-fever within three days of the night on which he sat and watched with me.

I have never cared to make any inquiries as to the previous inmates of the chambers. It is true I have heard that an inmate of one set cut his throat under peculiarly horrible circumstances; but I was never curious to identify the scene of the suicide's death with the chambers I occupied for so short a time; indeed, nothing would induce me ever again to enter Gray's-inn-square.



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THIRD APPEARANCE OF JOHN GRANGER'S GHOST.

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JOHN GRANGER

A Ghost Story

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET,' ETC.

CHAPTER I.

'THEN there is no hope for me, Susy?'

The speaker was a stalwart young fellow of the yeoman class, with a grave earnest face and a frank fearless manner. He was standing by the open window of a pleasant farmhouse parlour, by the side of a bright-eyed pretty-looking girl, who was leaning with folded arms upon the broad window-sill, looking shyly downwards as he talked to her.

'Is there no chance, Susy—none? Is it all over between us?'

'If you mean, that I shall ever cease to think of you as one of the best friends I have in this world, John, no,' she answered; 'or that I shall ever cease to look up to you as the noblest and truest of men, no, John—a hundred times, no.'

'But I mean something more than that, Susy, and you know it as well as I do. I want you to be my wife by and by. I'm not in a hurry, you know, my dear. I can bide my time. You're very young yet, and maybe you scarce know your own mind. I can wait, Susy. My love will stand wear and tear. Let me

have the hope of winning you by and by. I'm not a poor man at this present time, you know, Susy. There's three thousand pounds ready cash standing to my name in Hilloborough Bank; but with the chance of you for my wife, a few years would make me a rich man.'

'That can never be, John. I know how proud I ought to be that you should think of me like this. I'm not worthy of so much love. It isn't that I don't appreciate your merits, John; but—'

'There's some one else, eh, Susy?'

'Yes, John,' she faltered in a very low voice, and with a vivid blush on her drooping face.

'Some one who has asked you to be his wife?'

'No, John; but I think he likes me a little, and—'

John Granger gave a long heavy sigh, and stood for some minutes looking at the ground in dead silence.

'I think I can guess who it is,' he said at last; 'Robert Ashley,—eh, Susy?' The blush grew deeper, and the girl's silence was a sufficient answer. 'Well, he's a fine handsome young fellow, and more likely

to take a girl's fancy than such a blunt plain-spoken chap as I am; and he's a good fellow enough, as far as I know; I've nothing to say against him, Susy. But there's one man in the world I should have liked to warn you against, Susan, if I'd thought there was a shadow of a chance you'd ever listen to any love-making of his.'

'Who is that, John?'

'Your cousin, Stephen Price.'

'You needn't fear that I should ever listen to him, John. There's little love lost between Stephen and me.'

'Isn't there? I've heard him swear that he'd have you for his wife some day, Susan. I don't like him, my dear, and I don't trust him either. It isn't only that he bears a bad character up-town, as a dissipated, pleasure-loving spendthrift; there's something more than that; something below the surface, that I can't find words for. I know that he's very clever. Folks say that Mr. Vollair the lawyer looks over all his faults on account of his cleverness, and that he never had a clerk to serve him so well as Stephen does. But cleverness and honesty don't always go together, Susy, and I fear that cousin of yours will come to a bad end.'

Susan Lorton did not attempt to dispute the justice of this opinion. Stephen Price was no favourite of hers, in spite of those good looks and that showy cleverness which had won him a certain amount of popularity elsewhere.

John Granger lingered at the sunny window, where the scent of a thousand roses came floating in upon the warm summer air. He lingered as if loath to go and make an end of that interview, though the end must come, and the last words must needs be spoken very soon.

'Well, well, Susy,' he said presently, 'a man must teach himself to bear these things, even when they

seem to break his life up somehow, and make an end of every hope and dream he ever had. I can't tell you how I've loved you, my dear—how I shall love you to the end of my days. Bob Ashley is a good fellow, and God grant he may make you a good husband! But I don't believe it's in him to love you as I do, Susan. He takes life pleasantly, and has his mind full of getting on in the world, you see, and he has his mother and sisters to care for. I've got no one but you to love, Susan. I've stood quite alone in the world ever since I was a boy, and you've been all the world to me. It's bitter to bear, my dear; but it can't be helped. Don't cry, Susy darling. I'm a selfish brute to talk like this, and bring the tears into those pretty eyes. It can't be helped, my dear. Providence orders these things, you see, and we must bear them quietly. Good-bye, dear.'

He gave the girl his big honest hand. She took it in both her own, bent over it, and kissed it tearfully.

'You'll never know how truly I respect you, John,' she said. 'But don't say good-bye like that. We are to be friends always, aren't we?'

'Friends always? Yes, my dear; but friends at a distance. There's some things I couldn't bear to see. I can wish for your happiness, and pray for it honestly; but I couldn't stop at Friarsgate to see you Robert Ashley's wife. My lease of the old farm is out. I'm to call on Mr. Vollair this afternoon to talk about renewing it. I fancied you'd be mistress of the dear old place, Susy. That's been my dream for the last three years. I couldn't bear the look of the empty rooms now that dream's broken. I shall surrender the farm at once, and go to America. I've got a capital that'll start me anywhere, and I'm not afraid of work. I've old friends out there too: my first cousin, Jim Lomax, and his wife, that went out five years ago, and have been doing wonders with a farm in

New England. I sha'n't feel quite strange there.'

'Go to America, John, and never come back!' said Susan despondently. She had a sincere regard for this honest yeoman, and was grieved to the heart at the thought of the sorrow that had come to him through his unfortunate disposition to be something more to her than a friend.

'Never's a long word, Susy,' he answered in his grave straightforward way. 'Perhaps when a good many years have gone over all our heads, and when your children are beginning to grow up, I may come back and take my seat beside your hearth, and smoke my pipe with your husband. Not that I should ever cease to love you, my dear; but time would take the sting out of the old pain, and it would be only a kind of gentle sorrowful feeling, like the thought of one that's long been dead. Yes, I shall come back to England after ten or fifteen years, if I live, if it's only for the sake of seeing your children—and I'll wager there'll be one amongst them that'll take to me almost as if it was mine, and will come to be like a child to me in my old age. I've seen such things. And now I must say good-bye, Susy; for I've got to be up-town at three o'clock to see Mr. Vollair, and I've a deal of work to do before I leave.'

'Shall you go soon, John?'

'As soon as ever I can get things settled—the farm off my hands, and so on. But I shall come to say good-bye to you and your father before I go.'

'Of course you will, John. It would be unfriendly to go without seeing father. Good-bye!'

They shook hands once more; and the yeoman went away along the little garden path, and across a patch of furze-grown common-land, on the other side of which there was a straggling wood of some extent, broken up here and there by disused

gravel-pits and pools of stagnant water—a wild kind of place to pass at night, yet considered safe enough by the country people about Hillborough, as there was scarcely any part of it that was not within earshot of the high road. The narrow footpath across this wood was a short-cut between Matthew Lorton's farm and Hillborough, and John Granger took it.

He walked with a firm step and an upright bearing, though his heart was heavy enough as he went townwards that afternoon. He was a man to bear his trouble in a manly spirit, whatever it might be, and there were no traces of his disappointment in his looks or manner when he presented himself at the lawyer's house.

Mr. Vollair had a client with him; so John Granger was ushered into the clerks' office, where he found Stephen Price hard at work at a desk, in company with a smaller and younger clerk.

'Good - afternoon, Granger,' he said, in a cool patronising manner that John Granger hated; 'come about your lease, of course?'

'There is nothing else for me to come about.'

'Ah, you see, you're one of those lucky fellows who never want the help of the law to get you out of a scrape. And you're a devilish lucky fellow too, in the matter of this lease, if you can get Friarsgate farm for a new term at the rent you've been paying hitherto, as I daresay you will, if you play your cards cleverly with our governor presently.'

'I am not going to ask for a new lease,' answered John Granger; 'I am going to leave Friarsgate.'

'Going to leave Friarsgate! You astound me. Have you got a better farm in your eye?'

'I am going to America.'

Stephen Price gave a long whistle, and twisted himself round upon his stool, the better to regard Mr. Granger.

'Why, Granger, how is this?' he asked. 'A fellow like you, with plenty of money, going off to America! I thought that was the refuge for the destitute.'

'I'm tired of England, and I've a fancy for a change. I hear that a man may do very well in America, with a good knowledge of farming and a tidy bit of capital.'

'Ah, and you've got that,' said Stephen Price, with an envious sigh. 'And so you're thinking of going to America? That's very strange. I used to fancy you were sweet upon a certain pretty cousin of mine. I've seen you hanging about old Lorton's place a good deal of late years.'

John Granger did not reply to this remark. Mr. Vollair's client departed a few minutes later, and Mr. Granger was asked to step into the lawyer's office. He found his business very easy to arrange in the manner he wished. Mr. Vollair had received more than one offer for Friarsgate farm, and there was an applicant who would be glad to get the place as soon as John Granger could relinquish it, without waiting for the expiration of his lease. This incoming tenant would no doubt be willing to take his furniture and live and dead stock at a valuation, Mr. Vollair told John; who left the office in tolerable spirits, pleased to find there were no obstacles to his speedy departure from a home that had once been dear to him.

CHAPTER II.

JOHN GRANGER's preparations and arrangements, the disposal of his property, and the getting together of his simple outfit, occupied little more than three weeks; and it was still bright midsummer weather when he took his last walk round the pastures of Friarsgate, and for the first time since he had resolved to leave those familiar scenes realised how great a hold they had upon his heart.

'It'll be dreary work in a strange country,' he thought, as he leaned upon a gate, looking at the lazy cattle which were no longer his, and wondering whether they would miss him when he was gone; 'and what pleasure can I ever take in trying to get rich—I who have no one to work for, no one to take pride in my success? Perhaps it would have been better to stay here, even though I had to hear *her* wedding-bells and see her leaning on Robert Ashley's arm, and looking up in his face as I used to fancy she would look up to me in all the years to come. O God, how I wish I was dead! What an easy end that would make of everything!'

He thought of the men and women who had died of a fever last autumn round about Hillborough—people who had wished to live, for whom life was full of duties and household joys; whose loss left wide gaps among their kindred, not to be filled again upon this earth. If death would come to him, what a glad release! It was not that he suffered from any keen or violent agony; it was the dull blankness of his existence which he felt—an utter emptiness and hopelessness; nothing to live for in the present, nothing to look forward to in the future.

This was the last day. His three great chests of clothes, and other property which he could not bring himself to part with, had gone on to London by that morning's luggage-train. He had arranged to follow himself by the night-mail, which left Hillborough station at half-past nine, and would be in London at six o'clock next morning. At the last, he had been seized with a fancy for prolonging his time to the uttermost, and it was for this reason he had chosen the latest train by which he could leave Hillborough. He had a good many people to take leave of, and it was rather trying work. He had always been liked and respected,

and on this last day it surprised him to find how fond the people were of him, and how general was the regret caused by his departure. Little children hung about his knees, matronly eyes were wiped by convenient aprons, pretty girls offered blushingly to kiss him at parting; stalwart young fellows, his companions of old, declared they would never have a friend they could trust and honour as they had trusted and honoured him. It touched the poor fellow to the heart to find himself so much beloved. And he was going to sacrifice all this, because he could not endure to live in the old home now his dream was broken.

He had put off his visit to Matthew Lorton's house to the very last. His latest moments at Hillborough should be given to Susan. He would drain to the last drop the cup of that sweet sad parting. His last memory of English soil should be her bright tender face looking at him compassionately, as she had looked the day she broke his heart.

It was half-past seven when he went in at the little garden-gate. A warm summer evening, the rustic garden steeped in the low western sunshine; the birds singing loud in hawthorn and sycamore; a peaceful vesper calm upon all things. John Granger had been expected. He could see that at a glance. The best tea-things were set out in the best parlour, and Mr. Lorton and his daughter were waiting tea for him. There was a great bunch of roses on the table, and Susan was dressed in light-blue muslin, with a rose in her bosom. He thought how often in the dreary time to come she would arise before him like a picture, with the sunshine flickering about her bright hair and the red rose at her breast.

She was very sweet to him that evening, tender and gentle and clinging, as she might have been with a fondly-loved brother who was leaving

her for ever. The farmer asked him about his plans, and gave his approval of them heartily. It was well for a sturdy fellow with a bit of money to push his way in a new country, where he might make cent for cent upon his capital, instead of dawdling on in England, where it was quite as much as a man could do to make both ends meet at the close of a year's hard work.

'My little Susy is going to be married to young Bob Ashley,' Mr. Lorton said by and by. 'He asked her last Tuesday was a week; but they've been courting in a kind of way this last twelvemonth. I couldn't well say no, for Bob's father and I have been friends for many a year, and the young man's a decent chap enough. He's going to rent that little dairy-farm of Sir Marmaduke Halliday's on the other side of Hillborough-road. Old Ashley has promised to stock it for him, and he hopes to do well. It isn't much of a match for my girl, you know, John; but the young people are set upon it, so it's no use setting my face against it.'

They had been sitting at the tea-table nearly half an hour, when the sunny window was suddenly darkened by the apparition of Mr. Stephen Price, looking in upon them in an easy familiar manner, with his folded arms upon the sill.

'Good-evening, uncle Lorton,' he said. 'Good evening, Susy. How do, Granger? I didn't know there was going to be a tea-party, or I shouldn't have come.'

'It isn't a tea-party,' answered Susan; 'it is only John Granger, who has come to bid us good-bye, and we are very, very sorry he is going away.'

'O, we are, are we?' said the lawyer's clerk, with a sneer; 'what would Bob Ashley say to that, I wonder?'

'Come in, Steph, and don't be a fool,' growled the old man.

Mr. Price came in, and took his seat at the tea-table. He was flashily dressed, wore his hair long, and had a good deal of whisker, which he was perpetually caressing with a hand of doubtful cleanliness, whereon inky evidence of his day's work was very visible.

He did not care much for such womanish refreshment as tea, which he denounced in a sweeping manner as 'cat-lap ;' but he took a cup from his cousin nevertheless, and joined freely in the conversation while he drank it.

He asked John Granger a good many questions about his plans—whether he meant to buy land, and when, and where, and a great deal more in the same way—to all of which John replied as shortly as was consistent with the coldest civility.

' You take all your capital with you, of course?' asked Stephen Price.

' No ; I take none of my capital with me.'

' Why, hang it all, man, you must take some money !'

' I take the money I received for my furniture and stock.'

' Ah, to be sure ; you came to the office yesterday afternoon to receive it. Over six hundred pounds, wasn't it? I drew up the agreement between you and the new man ; so I ought to know.'

' It was over six hundred pounds.'

' And you take that with you? Quite enough to start with, of course. And the rest of your money is safe enough in old Lawler's bank. No fear of any smash there. I wish I was going with you, Granger ; I'm heartily sick of Hillborough. I shall cut old Vollair's office before very long, come what may. I can't stand it much longer. I've got a friend on the look-out for a berth for me up in London, and directly I hear of anything I shall turn my back upon this slow old hole.'

' You'll have to pay your debts

before you do that, I should think, Steph,' the farmer remarked bluntly.

Stephen Price shrugged his shoulders, and pushed his teacup away with a listless air. He got up presently and lounged out of the house, after a brief good-evening to all. He made no attempt to take leave of John Granger, and seemed in his careless way to have forgotten that he was parting with him for the last time. No one tried to detain him ; they seemed to breathe more freely when he was gone.

John and Susan wandered out into the garden after tea, while the farmer smoked his pipe by the open window. The sun was very low by this time, and the western sky flooded with rosy light. The garden was all abloom with roses and honeysuckle. John Granger fancied he should never look upon such flowers or such a garden again.

They walked up and down the little path once or twice almost in silence, and then Susan began to tell him how much she regretted his departure.

' I don't know how it is, John,' she said, ' but I feel to-night as if I would give all the world to keep you here. I cannot tell you how sorry I am you are going. O, John, I wish with all my heart I could have been what you asked me to be. I wish I could have put aside all thoughts of Robert.'

' Could you have done that, Susan?' he cried, with sudden energy.

His fate trembled upon a breath in that moment. A word from Susan, and he would have stayed ; a word from her, and he would never have taken the path across the common and through the wood to Hillborough on that bright summer evening. He was her valued friend of many years ; dearer to her than she had known until that moment. It seemed to her all at once that she had thrown away the gold, and had chosen—not dross, but some-

thing less precious than that unalloyed gold.

It was far too late now for any change.

'I have promised Robert to be his wife,' she said; 'but O, John, I wish you were not going away.'

'My dear love, I could not trust myself to stay here; I love you too much for that. But I will come back when I am a sober elderly man, and ask for a corner beside your hearth.'

'Promise me that. And you will write to me from America, won't you, John? I shall be so anxious, and father too, to know that you are safe and well.'

'Yes, my dear, I will write.'

'What is the name of the steamer you are to go in?'

'The Washington, and bound for New York.'

'I shall not forget that—the Washington.'

John Granger looked at his watch. The sun had gone down, and there was a long line of crimson yonder in the west above the edge of the brown furze-grown common. Beyond it, the wood dipped down, and the tops of the trees made a black line against that red light. Above, the sky was of one pale tender green, with stars faintly shining here and there.

'What a lovely night!' said Susan.

John Granger sighed as he looked at that peaceful landscape.

'I did not know how much I loved it,' he said. 'Good-night, Susy; good-night, and good-bye.'

'Won't you kiss me the last time, John?' she said shyly.

She scarcely knew what she had asked. He took her up in his arms, strained her to his breast, and pressed one passionate despairing kiss upon her brow. It was the first and last in his life.

'Time's up, Susy,' he said, gently releasing her.

He went to the window, shook

hands with the farmer, and took leave of him in that quiet undemonstrative way which means a good deal with some people. A minute more, and he was gone.

Susan stood at the garden-gate, watching the tall dark figure crossing the common. Twice he turned and waved his hand to her,—the last time upon the edge of the wood. That still twilight hour seldom came after that night without bringing the thought of him to Susan Lorton.

It seemed to grow dark all at once when he was gone, and the house had a dreary look to Susan when she went back to it. What was it that made her shiver as she crossed the threshold? Something—some nameless, shapeless fancy shook her with a sudden fear. Her father had strolled out to the garden through the wide open back-door. The house seemed quite empty, and the faint sound of the summer wind sighing in the parlour chimney was like the lamentation of a human creature in pain.

CHAPTER III.

THE summer passed, and in the late autumn came Susan's wedding-day. She was very fond of her good-looking generous-hearted young suitor, and yet even on the eve of her marriage her heart had turned a little regretfully towards absent John Granger. She was not a coquette, to glory in the mischief her beauty had done. It seemed to her a terrible thing that a good man should have been driven from his home for love of her.

She had thought of him a great deal since that summer night upon which he had looked back at her on the verge of Hawley Wood—all the more because no letter had come from him yet, and she was beginning to be a little anxious about his safety. She thought of him still more by and by, as the winter months passed without bringing the promised letter. Her husband made light of her fears, tell-

ing her that John Granger would find plenty to do in a new country, without wasting his time in scribbling letters to old friends. But this did not convince Susan.

'He promised to write, Robert,' she said; 'and John Granger is not the man to break his promise.'

Susan was very happy in her new home, and Robert Ashley declared he had the handiest, brightest, and most industrious wife in all Northlandshire, to say nothing of her being the prettiest. She had been used to keeping her father's house since her early girlhood, and her matronly duties came very easy to her. The snug little farmhouse, with its neat furniture and fresh dimity draperies, was the prettiest thing possible in the way of rustic interiors—the Dutch-tiled dairy was like a temple dedicated to some pastoral divinity—and Susan took a natural womanly pride in this bright home. She had come from as good a house; but then this was quite her own, and young Robert Ashley was a more romantic figure in the foreground of the picture than her good humdrum old father.

Stephen Price had not stayed at Hillborough long enough to see his cousin's wedding. He had left Mr. Vollair's employment about three weeks after John Granger's departure, and had left without giving his employer any notice of his intention.

He had gone away from Hillborough as deeply in debt as it was practicable for a young man in his position to be, and the tradesmen to whom he owed money were loud in their complaints about him.

He was known to have gone to London, and there was some attempt made to discover his whereabouts. But in that vast area it was no easy thing to find an obscure lawyer's clerk, and nothing resulted from the endeavours of his angry creditors. No one, except those to whom he owed money, cared what had become of him. He had been considered

pleasant company in a tavern parlour, and his manners and dress had been copied by aspiring clerks and apprentices in Hillborough; but he had never been known to do any one a kindness, and his disappearance left no empty place in any heart.

The new year came, and still there was no letter from John Granger. But early in January Robert Ashley came home from Hillborough market one afternoon, and told his wife she needn't worry herself about her old friend any longer.

'John Granger's safe enough, my lass,' he said. 'I was talking to Simmons, the cashier at Lawler's bank, this morning, and he told me that Granger wrote to them for a thousand pounds last November from New York, and he has written for five hundred more since. He is buying land somewhere—I forget the name of the place—and he's well and hearty, Simmons tells me.'

Susan clapped her hands joyfully.

'O, Robert, how glad I am!' she cried. 'It isn't kind of John to have forgotten his promise; but I don't care about that as long as he's safe.'

'I don't know why you should ever take it into your head that there was anything amiss with him,' said Robert Ashley, who did not regard John Granger's exile from a sentimental point of view.

'Well, I'm afraid I'm rather fanciful, Bob; but I could never explain to you what a strange feeling came over me the night John Granger went away from Hillborough. It was after I had said good-bye to him, and had gone back into the house, where all was dark and quiet. I sat in the parlour thinking of him, and it seemed as if a voice was saying in my ear, that neither I, nor any one that cared for him, would ever see John Granger again. There wasn't any such voice, of course, you know, Robert, but it seemed like that in my mind; and whenever I've thought of

poor John Granger since that time, it has seemed to me like thinking of the dead. Often and often I've said to myself, "Why, Susan, you foolish thing, you ought to know that he's safe enough out in America. Ill news travels fast; and if there'd been anything wrong, we should have heard of it somehow." But, reason with myself as I would, I have never been able to feel comfortable about him; and thank God for your good news, Robert, and thank you for bringing it to me.'

She raised herself on tiptoe to kiss her husband, who looked down at her in a fond protecting way from the height of his own wisdom.

'Why, Susy, what a timid nervous little puss you are!' he said; 'I should have been getting jealous of John Granger by this time, if I'd known you thought so much of him.'

The winter days lengthened, and melted into early spring. It was bright March weather, and Susan had an hour of daylight after tea for her needlework, while Robert attended to his evening duties out of doors. They had fires still, though the days were very mild; and Susan used to sit at the open window, with a jug of primroses on the wide wooden ledge before her, executing some dainty little repairs upon her husband's shirts.

One evening Robert Ashley was out later than usual, and when it had grown too dark for her to work any longer, Susan sat with her hands lying idle in her lap, thinking—thinking of her wedded life, and the years that had gone before it—years that she could never recall without the image of John Granger, who had been in a manner mixed up with all her girlish days. It had been very unkind of him not to write. It seemed as if his love for her could not have been very much after all, or he would have been pleased to comply with her request. She could

not quite forgive him for his neglect, glad as she was to know that he was safe.

The room was rather a large one; an old-fashioned room, with a low ceiling crossed by heavy beams; half parlour, half kitchen, with a wide open fireplace at one end, on which the logs had burnt to a dullish red just now, only brightening up with a faint flash of light now and then. The old chintz-covered arm-chair, in which Robert Ashley was wont to smoke his evening pipe, stood by the hearth ready for him.

Susan had been sitting with her face towards the open window, looking absently out at the garden, where daffodils and early primroses glimmered through the dusk. It was only the striking of the eight-day clock in the corner that roused her from her reverie. She stooped to pick up her work, which had fallen to the ground. She was standing, folding this in a leisurely way, when she looked towards the fireplace, and gave a little start at seeing that her husband's arm-chair was no longer empty.

'Why, Robert,' she cried, 'how quietly you must have come into the place! I never heard you.'

There was no answer, and her voice sounded strange to her in the empty room.

'Robert!' she repeated a little louder; but the figure in the chair neither answered nor stirred.

Then a sudden fright seized her, and she knew that it was not her husband. The room was almost dark; it was quite impossible that she could see the face of that dark figure seated in the arm-chair, with the shoulders bent a little over the fire. Yet she knew as well as ever she had known anything in her life, that it was not Robert Ashley.

She went slowly over towards the fireplace, and stood within a few paces of that strange figure. A little flash of light shot up from the smoul-

dering logs, and shone for an instant on the face.

It was John Granger!

Susan Ashley tried to speak to him; but the words would not come. And yet it was hardly so appalling a thing to see him there, that she need have felt what she did. England is not so far from America, that a man may not cross the sea and drop in upon his friends unexpectedly.

The logs fell together with a crashing noise, and broke into a ruddy flame, lighting up the whole room. The chair was empty.

Susan uttered a loud cry, and almost at the same moment Robert Ashley came in at the door.

'Why, Susy!' he exclaimed, 'what's amiss, lass?'

She ran over to him, and took shelter in his arms, and then told him how she had seen John Granger's ghost.

Robert laughed her to scorn.

'Why, my pet, what fancies will you be having next? Granger is safe enough over in Yankee land. It was some shadow that took the shape of your old friend, to your fancy. It's easy enough to fancy such a thing when your mind's full of any one.'

'There's no use in saying that, Robert,' Susan answered resolutely. 'It was no fancy; John Granger is dead, and I have seen his ghost.'

'He wasn't dead on the tenth of last December, anyhow. They had a letter from him at Lawler's bank, dated that day. Simmons told me so.'

Susan shook her head mournfully.

'I've a feeling that he never got to America alive, Robert,' she said. 'I can't explain how it is, but I've a feeling that it was so.'

'Dead men don't write letters, Susy, or send for their money out of the bank.'

'Some one else might write the letters.'

'Nonsense, lass; they know John

Granger's handwriting and signature well enough at the bank, depend upon it. It would be no easy matter to deceive them. But I'll look in upon Simmons to-morrow. He and I are uncommonly friendly, you know, and there's nothing he wouldn't do to oblige me in a reasonable way. I'll ask him if there have been any more letters from Granger, and get him to give me the address.'

Susan did not say much more about that awful figure in the arm-chair. It was no use trying to convince her husband that the thing which she had seen was anything more than a creation of her own brain. She was very quiet all the rest of the evening, though she tried her uttermost to appear as if nothing had happened.

Robert Ashley saw Mr. Simmons the cashier next day, and came back to his wife elated by the result of his inquiries. John Granger had written for another five hundred pounds by the very last post from America, and reported himself well and thriving. He was still in New York, and Mr. Simmons had given Robert Ashley his address in that city.

Susan wrote to her old friend that very afternoon, telling him what she had seen, and begging him to write and set her mind at ease. After all it was very consoling to hear what she had heard from her husband, and she tried to convince herself that the thing she had seen was only a trick of her imagination.

Another month went by, and again in the twilight the same figure appeared to her. It was standing this time, with one arm leaning on the high mantelpiece; standing facing her as she came back to the room, after having quitted it for a few minutes for some slight household duty.

There was a better fire and more light in the room than there had been before. The logs were burning

with a steady blaze that lit up the well-known figure and unforgotten face. John Granger was looking at her with an expression that seemed half reproachful, half beseeching. He was very pale, much paler than she had ever seen him in life; and as he looked, she standing just within the threshold of the door, she saw him lift his hand slowly and point to his forehead. The firelight showed her a dark stain of blood upon the left temple, like the mark of a contused wound.

She covered her face with her hands, shuddering and uttering a little cry of terror, and then dropped half fainting upon a chair. When she uncovered her face the room was empty, the firelight shining cheerily upon the walls, no trace of that ghostly visitant. Again when her husband came in she told him of what she had seen, and of that mark upon the temple which she had seen for the first time that night. He heard her very gravely. This repetition of the business made it serious. If it were, as Robert Ashley fully believed it was, a delusion of his wife's, it was a dangerous delusion, and he knew not how to charm it away from her mind. She had conjured up a new fancy now, this notion of a blood-stained temple; a ghastly evidence of some foul play that had been done to John Granger.

And the man was alive and well in America all the time; but how convince a woman of that fact when she preferred to trust her own sick fancies?

This time Susan Ashley brooded over the thoughts of the thing she had seen, firmly believing that she had looked upon the shadow of the dead, and that there was some purpose to be fulfilled by that awful vision. In the day, however busy she might be with her daily work, the thought of this was almost always in her mind; in the dead silence of the night, when her husband was

sleeping by her side, she would often lie awake for hours thinking of John Granger.

No answer had come to her letter, though there had been more than time for her to receive one.

'Robert,' she said to her husband one day, 'I do not believe that John Granger ever went to America.'

'O, Susy, Susy, I wish you could get John Granger out of your head. Who is it that writes for his money, if it isn't him?'

'Anybody might know of the money — people know everything about their neighbours' affairs in Hillborough—and anybody that knew John Granger's hand might be able to forge a letter. I don't believe he ever went to America, Robert. I believe some accident—some fatal accident—happened to him on the night he was to leave Hillborough.'

'Why, Susy, what should happen to him, and we not hear of it?'

'He might have been waylaid and murdered. He had a good deal of money about him, I know, that night; he was to sail from London by the Washington, and his luggage was all sent to an inn near the Docks. I wish you'd write to the people, Robert, and ask if he arrived there at the time he was expected; and I wish you'd find out at the station whether any one saw him go away by the train that night.'

'It's easy enough to do as much as that to please you, Susy. But I wish you wouldn't dwell upon these fancies about Granger; it's all nonsense, as you'll find out sooner or later.'

He wrote the letter which his wife wanted written, asking the landlord of the Victoria Hotel, London Docks, whether a certain Mr. John Granger, whose travelling chests had been forwarded from Hillborough, had arrived at his house on the 24th of July last, and when and how he had quitted it. He also took the trouble to go to the Hillborough station, in

order to question the station-master and his subordinates about John Granger's departure.

Neither the station-master nor the porters were able to give Robert Ashley any satisfactory information on this point. One or two of the men were not quite clear that they knew John Granger by sight; another knew him very well indeed, but could not swear to having seen him that night. The station-master was quite clear that he had *not* seen him.

'I'm generally pretty busy with the mail-bags at that time,' he said, 'and a passenger might very well escape my notice. But it would only have been civil in Granger to bid me good-bye; I've known him ever since he was a lad.'

This was not a satisfactory account to carry back to Susan; nor was the letter that came from London in a day or two much more satisfactory. The landlord of the Victoria Hotel begged to inform Mr. Ashley, that the owner of the trunks from Hillborough had not arrived at his house until the middle of August. He was not quite sure about the date; but he knew the luggage had been lying in his place for something over three weeks, and he was thinking of advertising it, when the owner appeared.

Three weeks! and John Granger had left Susan Lorton that July night, intending to go straight to London. Where could he have been? What could he have been doing in the interval?

Robert Ashley tried to make light of the matter. Granger might have changed his mind at the last moment—at the railway station, perhaps—and might have gone off to visit friends in some other part of the country. But Susan told her husband that John Granger had no friends except at Hillborough, and that he was not given to changing his mind upon any occasion. She had now a settled conviction that

some untimely fate had befallen her old friend, and that the letters from America were forgeries.

Ashley told his friend Simmons the story of the ghost rather reluctantly, but it was necessary to tell it in explaining how the letter to the London hotel-keeper came to be written. Of course Mr. Simmons was quite ready to agree with him that the ghostly part of the business was no more than a delusion of Susan's; but he was a good deal puzzled, not to say disturbed, by the hotel-keeper's letter. He had talked over John Granger's plans with him on that last day, and he remembered that John had been perfectly decided in his intention of going straight to London. The three weeks' interval between his departure from Hillborough and his arrival in that city was a mystery not easily to be explained.

Mr. Simmons referred to the letters from New York, and compared the signatures of them with previous signatures of John Granger's. If they were forgeries, they were very clever forgeries; but it was a plain commercial hand by no means difficult to imitate. There was one thing noticeable in the signatures to the American letters—they were all exactly alike, line for line and curve for curve. This rather discomposed Mr. Simmons; for it is a notorious fact, that a man rarely signs his name twice in exactly the same manner. There is almost always some infinitesimal difference.

'I'm going up to London in a month,' said the cashier; 'I'll call at the Victoria Hotel when I'm there, and make a few inquiries about John Granger. We can make some excuse for keeping back the money in the mean time, if there should be any more written for.'

Before the month was out, John Granger's ghost appeared for the third time to Susan Ashley. She had been to Hillborough alone to

make some little purchases in the way of linen-drapery, and came home through Hawley Wood in the tender May twilight. She was thinking of her old friend as she walked along the shadowy winding footpath. It was just such a still, peaceful evening as that upon which he had stood on the edge of the wood, looking back at her, and waving his hand, upon that last well-remembered night.

He was so much in her thoughts, and the conviction that he had come from among the dead to visit her was so rooted in her mind, that she was scarcely surprised when she looked up presently, and saw a tall familiar figure moving slowly among the trees a little way before her. There seemed to be an awful stillness in the wood all at once, but there was nothing awful in that well-known figure.

She tried to overtake it; but it kept always in advance of her, and at a sudden turn in the path she lost it altogether. The trees grew thicker, and there was a solemn darkness at the spot where the path took this sharp turn, and on one side of the narrow footpath there was a steep declivity and a great hollow, made by a disused gravel-pit.

She went home quietly enough, with a subdued sadness upon her, and told her husband what had happened to her. Nor did she rest until there had been a search made in Hawley Wood for the body of John Granger.

They searched, and found him lying at the bottom of the gravel-pit, half-buried in loose sand and gravel, and quite hidden by a mass of furze and bramble that grew over the spot. There was an inquest, of course. The tailor who had made the clothes found upon the body identified them, and swore to them as those he had made for John Granger. The pockets were all empty. There could be little doubt, that John Granger had been waylaid and mur-

dered for the sake of the money he carried upon him that night. His skull had been shattered by a blow from a jagged stick on the left temple. The stick was found lying at the bottom of the pit a little way from the body, with human hair and stains of blood upon it.

John Granger had never left Hillborough; and the person who had contrived to procure so much of his money, by forged letters from America, was, in all probability, his murderer. There was a large reward offered for the discovery of the guilty party; the police were hard at work; and the inquest was adjourned several times, in the hope that new facts might be elicited.

Susan Ashley and her father were examined closely as to the events of that fatal evening of July the 24th. Susan told everything: her cousin Stephen Price dropping in while they were at tea, the questions and answers about the money John Granger carried upon him—all to the most minute particular.

'Then Stephen Price knew of the money John Granger had about him?' suggested the coroner.

'He did, sir.'

'Did he leave your father's house after Granger, or before him?'

'Before him, sir: I should think nearly an hour before him.'

The inquest was again adjourned; and within a week of this examination Matthew Lorton received an application from the police, asking for a photograph of his nephew Stephen Price if he happened to possess such a thing.

He did possess one, and sent it to London by return of post.

The landlord of the Victoria Hotel identified the original of this portrait as the person who had represented himself to be John Granger, and had carried away John Granger's luggage.

After this the work was easy. Little links in the chain were picked

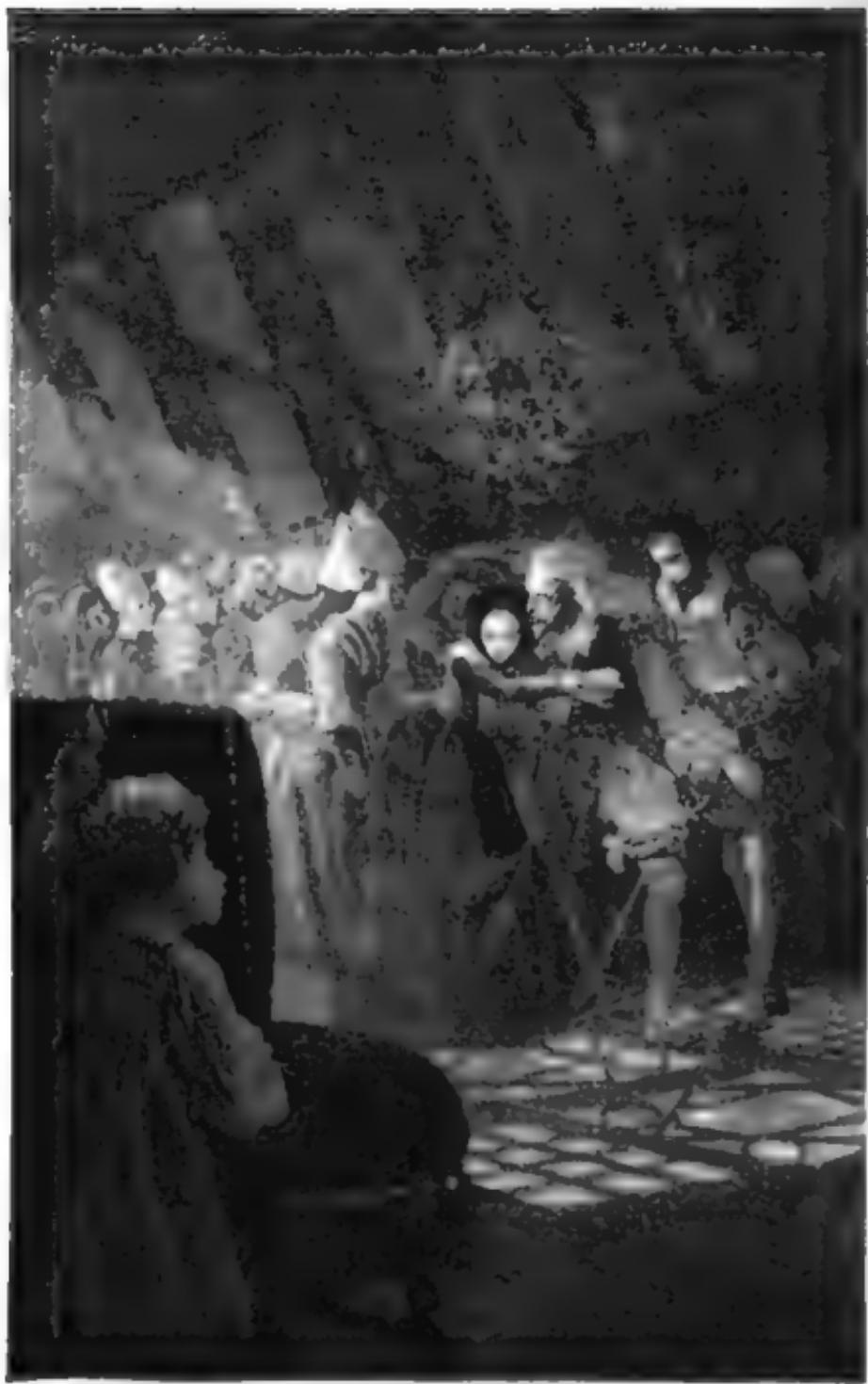
up one by one. A labouring man turned up who had seen Stephen Price sitting on a stile hard by Hawley Wood, hacking at a thick jagged-looking stake with his clasp-knife on the night of the 24th of July. The woman at whose house Price lodged gave evidence that he broke an appointment to play billiards with a friend of his on that night; the friend had called at his lodgings for him twice, and had been angry about the breaking of the appointment; and that Stephen Price came in about half-past ten o'clock, looking very white and strange, and saying that he had eaten something for his dinner which had made him ill. The lad who was his fellow-clerk was ready to swear to his having been disturbed and strange in his manner during the two or three weeks before he left Hillborough; but the boy had thought very little of this, he said, knowing how deeply Stephen was in debt.

The final examination resulted in a verdict of wilful murder; and a police-officer started for New York by the next steamer, carrying a warrant for the apprehension of Stephen Price.

He was not found very easily, but was ultimately apprehended, with

some of John Granger's property still in his possession. He was brought home, tried, found guilty, and hung, much to the satisfaction of Hillborough. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Vollair produced a will, which John Granger had executed a few days before his intended departure, bequeathing all he possessed to Susan Lorton—the interest for her sole use and benefit, the principal to revert to her eldest son after her death, the son to take the name of John. The bank had to make good the money drawn from them by Stephen Price. The boy came in due course, and was christened after the dead man, above whose remains a fair white monument has been erected in the rustic churchyard near Hawley Wood, at the expense of Robert and Susan Ashley; a handsomer tomb than is usually given to a man of John Granger's class, but it was the only thing Susan could do to show how much she had valued him who had loved her so dearly.

She often sits beside that quiet resting-place in the spring twilight, with her children busy making daisy-chains at her knee; but she has never seen John Granger's ghost since that evening in the wood, and she knows that she will never see it again.



C. J. Staelin, dir.

Pannemaker, sc.

GILES AND THE GHOSTS

GILES AND THE GHOSTS

BY TOM HOOD

THE Manor House stands gray and
grim

Among its elm-trees tall;
'Tis a spot all shun when the sha-
dows dim
Close-in at the twilight's fall.

A strange neglected silent place,
Slow dropping to decay—
The home long since of a noble race
For ever pass'd away.

No footstep on its threshold falls,
No voice is heard within its halls,
But still upon the mould'ring walls
The faded pictures hang:
The portraits of that ancient line—
Bard, warrior, statesman, and divine,
And matrons stately, maidens fine,
Once loudly toasted o'er the wine,
Until the rafters rang.

At Christmas-tide, they say, each
year,
The list'ning peasants vow they hear,
While lights gleam in the hall,
Strange music, beautiful and clear;
And aye avoid in dread and fear
The gray and ruin'd wall!

* * * *

One Christmas-tide at the dead of
night,
When the moon was high and the
snow lay white
On meadow and hill,
So quiet and still,
That the world seem'd sleeping,
The wind seem'd dead,
When the stars were keeping
Their watch o'erhead,
A troop of villagers, all intent
On carol-singing, their footsteps bent
From house to house; and wherever
they went

Sang the tidings of joy, which long
ago

The shining angels in glory bright
Told aloud in the midst of the
night
To the shepherds keeping their flocks
below.

* * * * *

O Giles! O Giles! O faithless Giles!
What are you doing there on the
tiles?

Your grandmother said,
When you went to bed,
She hoped you had quite got out of
your head
The notion you had,
Disobedient lad,
Of joining the carollers. This is too
bad!

Now she's asleep,
From your bed you creep,
And out on the roof—it is some-
what steep
And slippery—see how the snow-
flakes glisten—

You sit and listen,
To learn whereabouts the carollers
are.

You had better go back to bed by far,
Or something will happen, sure as
fate,
To make you repent, when it's all
too late!

In vain!
It is plain
That he will not refrain.
Cautiously down the roof he crawls,
And not without some stumbles and
falls

Reaches the ground
All safe and sound,
And hurries away with a stride and
a bound.

Hark ! there's music there in the wood.
 He's hurrying thither, by all that's good !
 How very absurd !
 For the boy has heard
 A thousand times that the hall is haunted ;
 But on he goes, and never feels daunted,
 For he says to himself as he goes along,
 That ghosts there may be
 Of men, but he
 Ne'er heard in his life of the ghost of a song ;
 That whatever sprites
 In the winter-nights
 Perchance may revisit the glimpse of the moon,
 There's no ghost of a chance for a ghost of a tune.

* * * *

The hall is bright
 With many a light ;
 And noble lady and noble knight—
 As if from its frame
 Each picture came,
 By two and two,
 A strange-looking crew—
 Are going the country-dance mazes through.
 Yonder maid
 In her grave was laid
 About the time of the last Crusade.

The gentleman near
 Was a Cavalier,
 And was kill'd by an Ironside severe.
 The beautiful blonde
 Standing beyond
 Was one of whom Harry the Eighth
 was fond.
 Her partner, I guess,
 Is nobody less
 Than a Lord High Admiral, *temp.*
 Queen Bess.

* * * *

But what is that, there
 Crouch'd down by a chair,
 With chattering teeth and bristling hair ?
 It is—No ! Yes ! Truly 'tis Giles,
 I declare,
 Wishing himself, you may safely swear,
 In the cupboard or under the stair—
 Anywhere—anywhere—anywhere !
 He fainted away,
 And there he lay
 Till somebody found him at break of day.
 They put him to bed,
 And they shaved his head,
 'Twas a very bad case of fever they said.
 And they would not receive
 At all, or believe
 The story he told
 Of the Manor House old,
 And the wonderful sight he had chanced to behold.

SHAUN'S SORROW*

A Tale of All-Hallow Eve

Most of our readers have a clear idea conveyed to their minds by the words 'an Irish cabin.' A vision of smoke and bare stones; cows, children, and pigs mingled in inextricable confusion; a withered old woman, knitting; a dark-haired, gray-eyed girl, with bare feet beneath her blue petticoat; two or three men, unshaven, stalwart, and *Irish-looking* — there is no better word.

In just such a cottage as this (or rather 'house,' for no Irishman would confess to a *cottage*) a party was gathered on the night before 'All-Saints Eve.' It was after sundown, and the door was closed at last against the chill sea-breeze which had blown through it so keenly all day.

'What will ye have for supper the morrow, Madge?' said a tall young man, who leant near the tiny square of minute panes which was dignified by the title of window. He addressed his sister, who was dexterously peeling potatoes into a round pot, as she balanced herself on a block of turf at his feet.

'Can't ye see yourself that I'm peeling for bruteen,† Me'heal? Mother bade Nancy bring over a quarter-stone of flour. There's no stint for tay or sugar either. If you or Antony will cross the ferry for a bit of flesh-meat, we should put Halley Eve past in grand style.'

All-Hallow's Eve is the great festival, or, as they term it, 'set-night,'

* 'Shaun,' Ivan, Juan (which last is pronounced by the Spaniards very much like the Irish 'Shaun'), are all varieties of the name *John*.

† 'Bruteen,' potatoes mashed with milk and butter.

of western Ireland. As a social period it comes far before Christmas-day or Easter Sunday in the estimation of the people. Most wonderful efforts the people make to pay all due honour to its observance; even the very poorest among them collect their eggs or save-up their pence to procure the unwonted luxury of 'white bread' at this time.

Michael O'Donnel and his family were accustomed to a sort of rough plenty. Their farm was large, their cows many; and since the father's death, Michael and his brother Anthony had found it easy to keep the house in plenty of potatoes during the autumn and winter, and in Indian meal and oaten cakes through the spring and summer. They had their own milk, butter, and eggs; and what could they possibly want more? Nothing surely, except on 'Halley Eve;' and then a little white flour, and even butcher's-meat, with rice, biscuits, and a handful of nuts, to make-up their yearly feast.

'Is it the morrow you're talking of, Madge?' said a man whose air and dress, as well as his superior mode of speech, proclaimed his superiority to the other occupants of the room. 'Take advice as is kindly given, and meddle only with pots of bruteen and scones of boxty,† and don't go trying charms and spells on this blessed night. Folks do more harm and draw nigher to danger than they know of, by them same things, as I well know.'

Madge looked up, knife and potato in hand, astonished at the un-

† 'Boxty,' a kind of bread made of the fibres of raw potato mixed with flour.

usual solemnity of his tone; and Michael said,

'What's that you're saying, Shaun? You're thinking of some story, I'll be boun'—Be aisy, Antony lad; hold yer chatter! Shaun is going to tell us the danger in Halley-Eve spells.'

'No, then, indeed and I could not. Troth, Michael, it's no subject for laughing.'

'I'm never laughin' at all, man alive. Tell away; there's but ourselves to listen.—Put over some sods on the fire, Antony.—Now, Shaun, we're all ears.'

But Shaun hung back—his face was where the leaping light of the peat-fire could not reach it—nor did he answer a word to Michael's loud demands for his 'story.' It was only when Madge and her mother joined in urging him, and even Antony had added his rough pleading, that, seeing he had no choice but to comply, he began, speaking in a low faltering tone, which, however, soon regained its deep and somewhat gruff composure.

'I think I've told you I was living in County Kerry when I was a lad, far enough from here. My father was keeper to Lord Rathconnel, and we had the cosiest house in the park. My sister was lady's-maid up at the Hall; and O, but my lady was kind to the both of us! I had wonderful learning for a poor lad, and my lady would come stepping over the grass to our house, carrying books for me with her own hands. I mind that I thought myself as grand as the priest himself, when she would give me the packets, and promise me more when I had finished with them. I believe, now, the angels in heaven can be no better nor fairer than she was.'

'We kept Halley Eve much as ye do in these parts. But I don't rightly know if you hold to a thing I'd heard talked-of there. They said, if at midnight a man took a riddle and some thrashed corn, and

opened the two doors of the barn, so as the wind swept clear through, then began to winnow the grain, and say the name of the Evil One, that you would see the form of her that was to be your wife passing before your eyes.

'Yes, Madge, it was wicked—it was as wicked as the sea is deep, as the spink* out yonder is high. But the tales of the people worried me. Were my books right in calling such things foolish old-wives' tales? or was there a truth and a power in them which all the learning in the world could not shift away and hide? I could not tell; so I thought I'd prove this night if there was indeed truth in them, or if they were as shale† and empty as I had read that they were.

'Lord Rathconnel's coachman lived in a house at the end of the stable-yard. He had only the wife and a pretty wee daughter, a little gissah‡ of eight or nine. Often I'd be at the kennels feeding the dogs, and wee Norah would come to pat their heads, and give her own chosen pets some scraps she had saved for them; and the brutes knew her right well, and would mind her lightest word. Hers were the prettiest ways. Many's the bit of a basket I've made for her, and many's the boat I've cut for her out of the slagh-mara.§ She would stand watching her father, as he strapped the clothes on the horses, with her school-bag in her hand and a black-silk handkerchief knotted over her head. Sometimes, if it was in a lonely lane he met her, William would lift her on the back of one of the horses which he was exercising; and there she'd sit, as easy and as happy as a bird on a high-grown twig.'

* 'Spink,' cliff.

† 'Shale,' shallow.

‡ 'Gissah,' girl.

§ 'Slagh-mara,' the stem of the seaweed: often found as thick as a woman's arm.

'It was Halley Eve—not such a night as this, blustering and cold as January, but clear and soft, the moon nigh to the full, and the sea like the fairy-pool down yonder. I knew there would be no living soul in the yard at midnight. The big loft would just do for my evil charm, could I but get holt of the keys. They were always on a nail in the kitchen of William's house. So there I went at night-falling to seek a chance of getting my fingers on them. And, faith, the chance was easy found. The kitchen was empty, and the keys hung handy to the door. I took them down, when wee Norah's voice said behind me,

"Where are ye going to-night, Shaun? To the grain-loft, or to the meal-room? Or are ye going to the barn? and may I go with you to look after my pigeon? My white pigeon will roost in there, and it must not. O, Shaun dear, catch it for me!"

"I'm going to the barn, ahaska,* and I'll look for the pigeon. But I'm not going yet. Sit down a bit. Is your mother out? Well, just sit here on the creepy-stool, and I'll put some bog-wood on to blaze for us."

'And so saying I slipped the keys in my pocket, and we talked away there by the fire, she telling me of the wonderful shells the coastguard's wife at the point had shown her. "And, Shaun, they are all green and gold and silver. Do you think they are made of all the old rainbows that fall into the sea?—they look just like that." And then I told her of the book my lady had lent me. How a brave good knight was angry and black-hearted to his beautiful innocent wife, because he believed a lie of her; how he forced her to ride, one long summer day, on ahead of himself, and charged her not to dare to speak to him, but to ride on in silence; how three robbers came on him, and she screamed to let him know the danger; and how

* 'Ahaska,' my dear one.

he vanquished them, and then blamed her for her disobedience, in speaking the word even to warn him.

"Ah," said Norah, "sure his anger had darkened his heart and his eyes. And she didn't know *why* he was that wild with her? Then, if I had been her, I'd have clung tight, tight hold of his arms, and made him tell me, and love me again. *Did* he love her again, Shaun?"

'And I told the child that he had loved the whole time, hard and hot; and how, when he was wounded and half killed, he found out all his thoughts of her badness were false, that she was as brave and as pure-hearted as even his mad love would ask for her to be; how they rode homeward on the one horse, her cheek lying against his shoulder, and her hand pressing the scarf to his wounded side.

"Come again and tell me more about my lady's books, Shaun. Come again, won't you?"

'And so I said I would indeed, and soon; but—' and the voice of the strong man sank to so low a cadence, that the listeners bent forward to catch his words—'but never again did I sit by the coachman's fire. Only once more did I ever hold wee Norah's hands in mine, and hear her sweet pretty words. *And that once—O, Virgin Mother! can ever I cease to see her as she was then?*

'Shaun,' and it was Madge's voice that spoke, 'don't ye go on. It is hurting ye cruel, and—' She stopped, her own eyes were full of tears.

'No, Madge lass; I wanted to tell this to *you*. I'd best tell it quick, and be done with it. It's long years since I've spoke of it to mortal man or woman, and the words stick in my throat.'

'I went to the barn, and opened the big doors wide, and the silent moonlight came in in a broad path along the floor. I stood waiting for the stable-clock to strike twelve. I can hear it often now in my sleep—'

—the loud deep sound which made me start, even though it was waiting for it I was. I winnowed the corn upon the floor, and, God forgive me! I spoke the evil name. When there I saw, standing with the broad moonlight on her white dress, wee Norah! I stood still in a strange kind of stony fear. O, if that had been the only dread I was to feel that night! I stood, and she stood; and then softly and glidingly she came up along the moonlight track right fornenst* me.

'I suppose I thought it was a spirit, for I sprung back, knocking with all my weight against something behind me.

'There was a terrible crash, and I heard wee Norah's sharp scream; and I myself gave the echo of her cry in a loud shout. They heard it in the house; and when they found us, I was holding the pretty child in my arms, calling madly on her to open her eyes. And there beside us lay the heavy long ladder which my wild spring had brought crashing down on her innocent head. The yellow hair was all stained with blood, and on her white—but there, I can't say more about it! She spoke to me once: "Shaun, come tomorrow evening, and tell me more of the gentle lady and the knight who loved her."

'I suppose she was raving. Certainly she did not groan or sigh or seem to know she was hurt. She lifted herself from my arms when William came. "Father," she said, "O father!" and that was all.

'There was an inquest. They did not blame me. How I wished they would! I did not much care what became of me. But there was no trial. They said at the inquest the darling was accustomed to walk in her sleep, and must have unbolted the door, come in to the yard, and strayed by chance into the open

* 'Fornenst,' before.

barn, thinking, perhaps, of her pigeon. But I knew better. Not one inch did she stray. She was led by the Black King, whose evil name my guilty lips had spoken. She was so lily-pure, he could not harm her; so he made me do it—me who would have died for her.

'I could not face the father and mother who had loved her, though never they said one hard word to me. Could I go and feed the dogs, and see the horses stepping along, and watch the dumb brutes waiting for her, and longing for her? Could I meet their eyes—I who had killed her? And so I came away. His lordship was rare and kind, and got me this place here with Mr. Heygate. And my lady—if it hadn't been for that angel, I should have died; I think I must have died, though hearts don't break as often-times as folks say—my lady, she wrote to me two whole letters, as kind and good as herself. She knew I suffered—my God! how I have suffered!'

His voice died away in a kind of wail. There was a strange element of poetry and passion in this man, almost peasant-born as he was. But there runs through the Irish nature a vein of high-toned feeling for which we must search in vain among the coarser, blunter lower classes of England. It may strike some ears as unnatural that one like Shaun O'Donnel could either dream over 'Enid,' or be capable of the deep and lasting anguish that had so nearly crushed his life. Years had passed since that terrible night, and had borne away with them somewhat of the keener edge of his remorse, leaving a curious tender self-pity in its stead. But now lately this had grown into anguish, unknown save in such intense natures as his, until he could bear it no more, and he felt he must utter it.

And Madge? She had sat very still, her face hidden in the deep

shadow. She uttered no word, nor joined in the exclamations and expressions of pity and interest which fell from her mother and brothers. Neither she nor O'Donnell heard their import; but the murmur annoyed her, and she silently rose and slipped away.

He had risen as he finished his recital, and stood gazing into the turf-fire. It had burnt-out all its leaping glories now, and lay quiet, the glowing embers bordered by a ring of pearly ashes. The similitude struck him. Youth, with its passion, its anguish, its keen joys; and the inevitable end, when dull age creeps on, and dims and deadens both pain and joy into grayness and coldness. Was it coming for him? Was this fresh griping pain, and the new-born love at his heart, but the last effort of his youth's leaping fire? White hairs threaded his thick brown curls, long lines were drawn on his forehead and round the still, grave mouth. But—and the conviction struck him with bleak certainty—he was not old; he *felt* he was not old. There was warmth and strength yet in his heart that would defy years to quench or time to kill. No, he must struggle on, and suffer still.

He turned with rather a choked 'Good-night.'

'Ah, but nonsense! sure ye're not going away this early, and it raining too? Sit down, man, and eat a bit of supper,' urged Michael.

But he would not listen. With hasty thanks he passed out into the stormy autumn night, almost knocking over a woman's form as he shut the door behind him.

'Madge! is it you? Go in. Ye are wet and cold. Go in. O, my darling, *cu' jeytha slan, ahuilish mahuil agus machree!*'*

'Shaun, what are ye doin'?' she

* Farewell to you, light of my eyes and of my heart.

cried in a broken frightened voice, as she felt his arms round her, and heard his passionate words.

He let her go instantly.

'What am I doing? I don't rightly know. I only know I love you, Madge. But I did not mean to tell you so. I *did not mean* to tell you so!—I have no right. I was to see *my wife* that hideous night, and now I must remain married to the spirit that comes to me often in my lonely house by the river; comes to me with the moonlight on its smiling face, and the blood-stains on its yellow hair. Madge!'—and the fire flashed again into the voice which had been speaking in grave lifeless tones—'Madge, I tell you it wanted but my love of you to break my heart entirely. Was not my life black enough already?'

He felt her fingers on his arm.

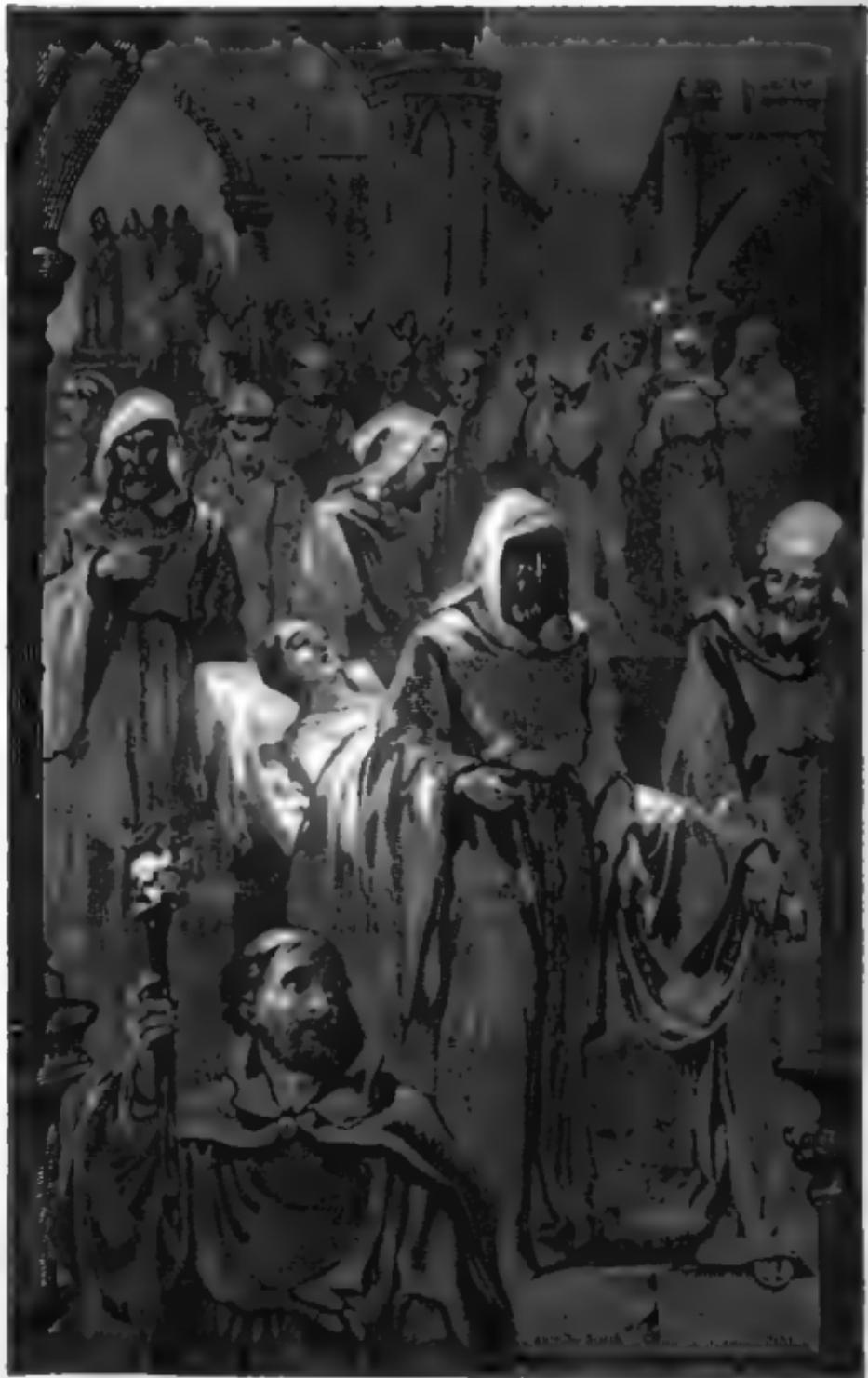
'You mistake. It is not *Norah* that comes to haunt you. She did not even know it was your hand which struck the ladder down on her pretty head. She is not angered with you. She loved you well, and maybe she's leaning down from heaven to see if you are happy too. Ah, Shaun dear!'

The pleading tone made itself heard amidst the tumult of his feelings, and roused another thought. Madge loved him. Was she to be sacrificed too to the memory of his life's sorrow?

He turned to her suddenly.

'Are ye brave enough to wed me, Madge? Will ye dare to face the spirit that comes to freeze me into stone? Will you, knowing all, come to my fireside down by the water? Will you take away the long curse off Halley Eve by proving it was *not* my bride I saw that weary night? Will ye dare to marry a grave sad man like me? Speak, Madge.'

And she spoke; and through the darkness and the rain, Rest and Hope entered his soul with her soft 'I will.'



Thomas Gray del

Pannemaker, sc

OBSCURE PROCESSION

A GHOSTLY PROCESSION

A widow'd life and lonely
Men seek in our sad band,
Out of the world, Death only
Walks with us hand-in-hand.
I, who now bear thee slowly,
Would fain well know and wholly,
What thou, who wert so holy,
Dost on the unknown strand !

What benefit buds' graces,
Of fruit if they be bare ?
What the best life, whose trace is
An arrow's in the air ?
On thy full lap the rarest
Of lots were cast, the fairest
Of body and mind; what bearest
Thou now, beyond, more fair ?

To leave so soon all laughter,
All love to leave so soon;
From fear of frost hereafter,
To lose the warmth of June !
Ah, were not this far sweeter—
For so would life fly fleeter,
To meet some maid, and greet her,
Beneath a midnight moon ?

Though pomp be only seeming,
And seeming only fame,
His face, who lies a-dreaming
Of these, is flush'd with flame.
Dear is that dream we sever
From our young eyes, for ever,
To die where morn may never
Loose from long night our name ?

What helps wild prayer and fasting ?
Though women's mouths be clay,
And life but one day lasting,
It lasts at least one day.
Though death sometime discloses
White bones, and what it shows is
Sad, all may see some roses
Ere we and these decay.

If no bloom in life's ways is
For us, from warmer clime,
May not we gather daisies
In April's laughing prime ?
Pluck, ere it fade, some flower;
For none, no mortal power,
Not even for an hour,
May make a truce with time.

This is the end—monks bearing
The dead with music's moan,
And gleam of torches glaring
On faces quaint in stone.
The golden bowl is broken,
The cross laid for a token,
The last farewell is spoken,
Thou art at last alone !

Lost life, without all pleasure,
Lost life, which leavest no mark !
Or hast thou laid thy treasure
Where is no worm nor cark ?
And working that which right is,
Knowest now what true delight is,
Beyond, where never night is
Nor borderland of dark ?

He wore the martyr's wreath, he
Forgot no sacred ties,
He never drank the Lethe
Of woman's loving eyes.
What is his meed for weeping ?
Is it eternal sleeping,
Or, as men tell us, reaping
Ripe harvest in the skies ?

They tell us walls of crystal
And sapphire, beryl, sard
Are ours, those wise, who wist all
Secrets from mortals barr'd ;
A city ours, all golden
Like glass, to be beholden
Of us, who pace with folden
Hands in our cloister'd yard.

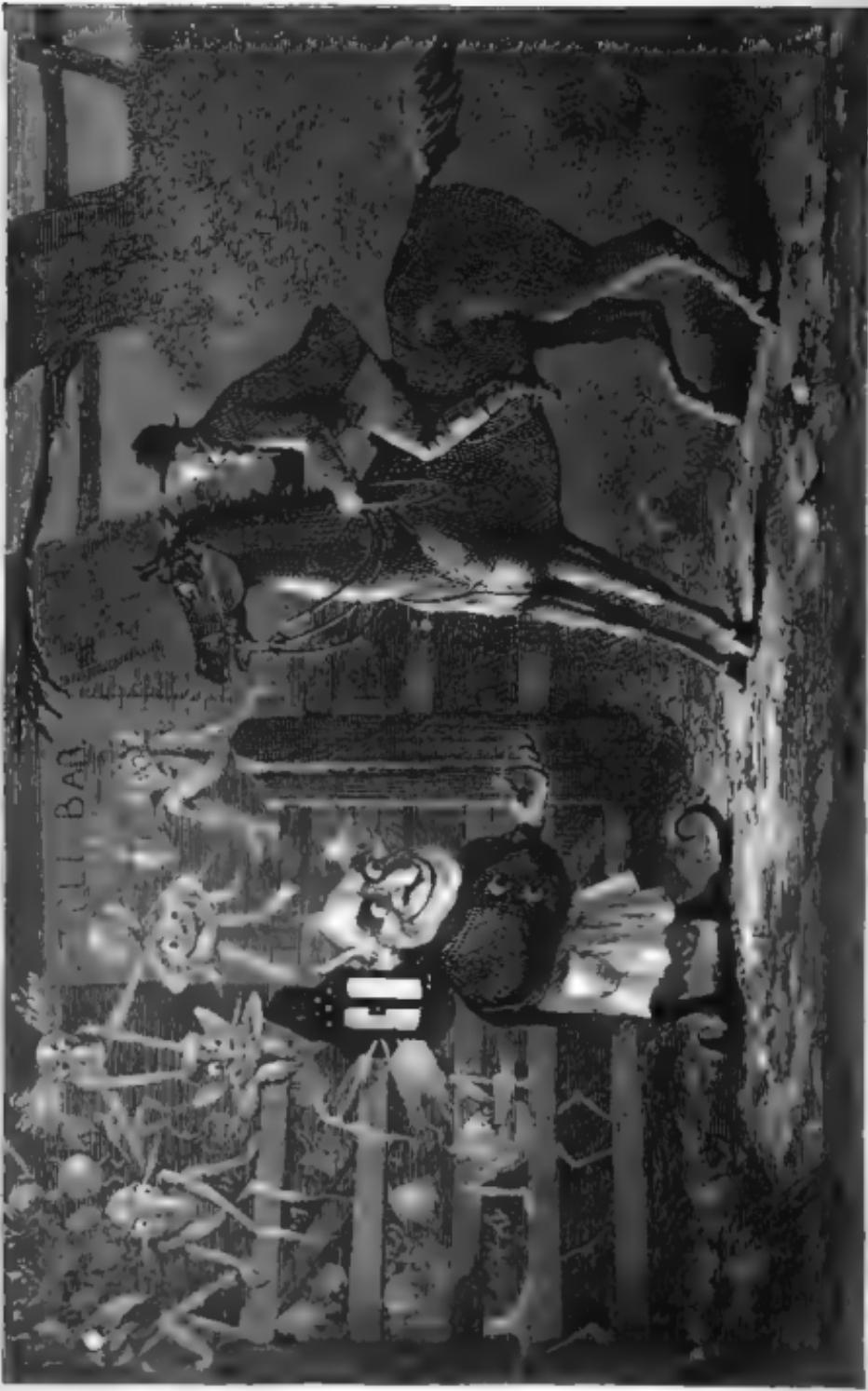
They tell us spring eternal
Flings there empurpled flowers ;
But naught of things diurnal,
But naught of earthly hours,
But not the world's high places,
But not warm sweet embraces,
But no fair children's faces,
A common pledge, are ours.

Who shall our darkness lighten,
To see behind the veil !
Would heaven they might untighten,
Dead lips, to tell the tale :
If lives, by sorrows shaken,
If love, of love forsaken
Can aught, if men may waken,
For after good avail.

A. Cranston, No.

WHAT MR. TIDKIN SAW AT THE LYON GATE.

Walter G. R. Brown, del.



THE LYCH-GATE

A Sporting Tailor's Story

BY WAT. BRADWOOD, AUTHOR OF 'O. V. II.,' 'ENSEMBLE,' ETC.

'Don't tell me,' said little Tidkins energetically, as he superintended the more accurate measurement of my knee, about the commencement of a cub-hunting season—'don't tell me, sir, that because a man's a Cockney by birth and profession he must needs be cockneyfied in all his tastes also; and that because a poor devil's fate is to mount the shop-board ninety-nine days out of a hundred, he cannot for that reason appreciate a good mount with hounds when luck throws it in his way.'

'I never said so, Tidkins.'

'Not you, sir; but there are many that do, and who make it their business to laugh at any outsider who once and away tries to take a quiet share in their sport. They think a shopkeeper was never born to ride so much as a donkey; and as for a tailor, it's the very term of reproach that they apply to a bad rider, no matter where he's come from—one of themselves maybe, and likely as not. It ain't fair, I say, and it ain't sportsman-like; a sportsman is and should be a cosmopolitan, and should give and take. And so long as a stranger don't override hounds, nor head the fox, nor cross at a fence, nor stick in a gateway, it's nobody else's business where he comes from, or whither he goes to.'

'You're all there, Tidkins,' I said; 'and I quite agree with you, although I never knew, as regards yourself, that you were an enthusiastic sportsman.'

'I ain't so slight nor so light, and I ain't so young, as I was; but there

was a time when I'd enjoy a good day with the best of them; there wasn't such jealousy either in those days in the Midlands. Morning expresses didn't play coverbacks to bring down half-a-hundred strangers on a Saturday to the grass; and we used to hear none of those sort of Kilkenny disputes that serve to set landed proprietors and masters of hounds by the ears nowadays. Game preserving had not reached such a pitch as it now has; foxes and pheasants used to live together. Country gentlemen had no railways to break up local society, and tempt them to town to make them drops in the ocean of London society; they hung together, in sports and interests alike, and vulpecides were almost myths. That other pair of cords will be repaired in ten minutes if you like to wait for them, and plenty of time still before the 5.0 express. If you like to smoke a cigar with me in the counting-house, I could tell you a bit of gossip in that time that might amuse you, and read a lesson to some masters of hounds to this day.'

It was not half a bad regalia that the worthy and loquacious Tidkins bestowed upon me, as I lounged back in a snug arm-chair, while he, perched on a high-backed stool, his cigar stuck edgeways in his mouth, looked down from aloft on me, and took up his parable.

'I used generally to manage a trip once in a season to the farm of my brother-in-law that is now—old schoolfellow of mine and chum; we had always been thick since we were

at the commercial school at Bradford together as younkers. He'd shake down with me if he'd to come up to London on business, and I'd have my turn with him and a friendly mount or two some time in the winter.

' There's one day I remember well—a bad scenting day as ever I knew: east wind, raw and cheerless, early in March. It had been a rough night, and cover after cover we drew—blank, blank, blank; foxes seemed all dead or on the travel. Soon after Ned Green (that's my brother-in-law) and I had had our snack—a piece of cold pork - pie and sup of brandy—about two o'clock, Ned's old horse drew a foreshoe in a deep clayey ride. There wasn't a blacksmith handy for five miles; so says he, "I shall cut it, Tom," says he; "I want to have a look over the ewes before dusk ; no reason why you shouldn't stick to it though. There might be a bit of gallop now, more specially if you get hold of an old dog-fox;" and off he jogged home.

' Sure enough about four o'clock the sun managed to get his nose out, and the wind veered a little by the south. We found in a dingle, the last bit left for the day's draw. Nobody saw the fox go away; but a ploughboy holloaed, and we got on the line a field away, and had a bit of a ring of ten or fifteen minutes. A very bad fox; wouldn't face the open; and after ringing to the left, ran back to the cover where we had found.

' Ned's old mare wasn't the one to make a mistake, clever as a cat and cunning as a lawyer; but over a little bit of loose fence next but one to the cover, that a donkey might have walked through, she gave me about the biggest buster I ever had or knew of—for a man not to be hurt, at all events. There was a grip on the far side, and she lands both forefeet in it, half pulls them out as she stumbles over, and then rolls over and over and over, grunting like

an old sow, while I had luckily shot just clear of her on to my head. I saw stars enough to make a Milky Way, and could just remember seeing a white belly and a lot of loose hoofs all about me as we toppled over, and that was nearly all.

' When I had picked myself up, I found a farmer friend of Ned's holding the old girl's bridle, my hat stove-in of course, and head all of a swim; and as for the old mare, breastplate and girths were clean burst away with the struggle she had made to save herself, and the saddle was trailing between her forelegs by the breast-plate, one side-buckle of which had held good in the general mucker.

' A go of neat brandy soon put me straight in the head, though I felt stiffish in the neck and shoulders, and was cut on the shin rather nastily by the mare's hoofs, or something of the sort. She looked scared, but none the worse for that; and by the time that we had wiped the mud out of her eyes and forelock, I began to think about getting home again. There was not much sport lost by the accident; the master had viewed the fox into cover, a vixen in cub, and which accounted for her skittish running, and he gave orders to stop the hounds. They did nothing more that day.

' We hitched the saddle upon the mare's back, buckled the two girths together, and so made a sort of surcingle, and then proceeded through gateways to the nearest main road. Ned's house was a good dozen miles distant. Market Dawdle was not two miles off, and on my way. The safest plan was to stay there an hour or two, and find a saddler to repair damages, while I got a social steak at the commercial inn.

' However so-so may have been a day's sport with hounds, there is always sufficient exercise and exposure in the mere sitting in the saddle, or jogging from cover to cover during a blank day, to entitle a man to plead the proverb of " hungry as a

hunter;" and in one sense, the more inferior the sport, the more natural is it for a fellow to seek solace in his dinner, and to drown disappointment in a stiff go or two of hot brandy-and-water.

' I was on much better terms with myself and affairs in general, when, having discussed a pound-and-a-half of steak and a couple of good glasses of grog, I called for a cigar, and turned to the adjacent smoking-room.

' There was already a goodly assembly there; and the atmosphere was sufficient, at first, to make my throat wheeze and my eyes water, as I peered through the cloud and endeavoured to reconnoitre who were assembled in the room.

' Three others beside myself were in hunting dress; the rest of the company were local gossips of the town, smoking the evening pipe of peace after business hours.

' Old Dan Phelps, the sporting attorney and secretary to the Hunt—as good a man over a country in days gone by as could have been found in the Midlands, till a broken rib or two and an invasion of rheumatics had tied him down to his office and arm-chair—was holding forth fluently as I entered, and called for another go of hot grog.

" Sport's sport all the world over, I'll grant you," he said; "and as to foxes, it does 'em good to kill 'em. The more you kill, the more you'll have. And what's more, when hounds have well earned their fox, and want a drop of blood, I call it a downright fraud to bilk them at the end of a run, just because a lout of an earthstopper has left holes open, and the master is impatient to get away, or stingy of his foxes, and wants to let the beggar off to show sport another day. I call that chousing."

" They'll plead he was a game one, and had earned a respite. Game! why, in course he'd ought to be; he was running for his life, and would be a fool if he didn't do his dirti-

est to save himself. And ain't the hounds all as game and stanch too, running for sheer pluck and generosity, not for their lives? 'Course they are, man. Dig him out, I say, and let them have their reward. But on t'other hand, just at this time of year, the case isn't quite the same with a vixen, and in cub too. It's due to the sex, you see. We almost always stretch a point to save a woman from the gallows, however bad a lot she may be; and certainly, if there's prospect of a family, she can claim a respite, if not a reprieve. So with a vixen, thief and poacher though she is with the rest of them. And as you can't respite her only, you must, if you can, reprieve her altogether. It ain't for her sake so much as for her unborn young, that haven't done harm, and will live to show sport. I'd have been ashamed of Charles if he hadn't whipped off that vixen to-day, as you say. Foxes are foxes, and sport is sport, and money is money; but he was a very darned fool who killed his goose with the golden eggs."

" It's no wonder old Dan was a bit dry after his sermon. When he'd had a suck at his grog, I said, complimentary like:

" You've seen as much hunting in these shires as the best of them in your day, so they say, Mr. Phelps."

" Time was," says he; "but I'm broke down now; and perhaps it's the best thing—take it all round in a business way—for the office didn't see me two days a week for five months of the year till about six years ago. You're down with Ned Green, I reckon?"

" I am that," says I.

" I thought I'd seen your face with him in these parts before this. He's a good sort is young Ned, and so was his father before him. Glad to see you down here; what will you drink with me? Their brandy's pretty fair, but their rum's first-rate. What do you say, lad?"

'It was as good a tumbler of rum-punch as ever I drank in my life that old Dan mixed for me with his own hand; and when he'd wet his whistle in it, and had reached over the table to me, he began again, as he turned to another old gentleman that sat in the fireside-corner:

"You mind young Winstanley, that had the county a season or two forty years agone?"

'The patriarch nodded over his glass.

"There's a bit of a yarn about him and a vixen fox that would teach these good folk a bit of a lesson.— You were there that day, Sam, and I wasn't, so perhaps you'll spin it out for them; you're a better hand at one than I am."

'Thus admonished, Sam Venables, the auctioneer, ruddy-faced, silver-haired, and twenty stun in his chair, sucked his lips, took a pull at his cigar, and took up his parable.

"His name wasn't Winstanley. He came from London, and he had been Dobbs, and his father was an alderman; but he came down to these parts, and bought Sumner-park, that had been Squire Ferrers', afore he was broke electioneering (the votes was bid-up to five hundred a-piece—that's auctioneering for you, if you like!); and he called himself Winstanley, because it wasn't his name. However, he came, and he settled, and he wasn't such a bad-looking lad. And then he ran away with Lady Mary Currie, she as used to live with her mother at a little cottage place on the Drayton-road—it's pulled down now. He'd lots of money too, and he'd throw it away free enough, in his own way. That was how he came to take the hounds, 'cause he didn't think about subscriptions; though there were many that got their backs up awful at the idea of a master of our hounds whose father had come from London city, and who hadn't lived half a generation in the county.

"However, he didn't hunt them long, poor lad. I remember it was just such a day as this; bad sport, bad scent, cold east wind and drizzling rain the best part of the day; and late in the afternoon we found a fox, ran a bit of ring, and to ground in a drain under the turnpike-road, again' the Lych-gate on the Drayton-road, about eight miles from here.

"So young Winstanley he sent for a pick and spade, and in about ten minutes Charles Bray, the whip (that's the father of Charles that hunts the hounds now), puts his arm in and catches hold of his brush. Just as he gets the fox's hind-quarters up to the mouth of the drain, says he to me, close by, 'It's a vixen she is, and heavy in cub too. Just jog back to the master, and ask him if he can't take the hounds away?' And he lets go the brush, and the vixen slips up again to the end of the drain.

"So I trotted up to the master, who had drawn his hounds a couple of hundred yards up the road, and I told him. 'Vixen be d—d!' says he; 'the hounds have earned their fox, and they want blood. Tell Charles to fork her out quick before it's dark.'

"Colonel Forster, brother of him that had the hounds before Winstanley,—he heard what I had told the master, and he came up and said a word or two,—that he hoped the master would allow him to plead for a lady's life, and for that of her future family; and that he thought the country could not afford such a waste of foxes.

'I know my business, thank you, Colonel Forster,' says young Winstanley; and he trots on down to the drain.

'I can't countenance such unsportsman-like murder,' says the Colonel sharply. 'That' comes of bringing shops into the shires.' And he turns back and tells a lot of the gentlemen what young Winstanley is after.

"So they trot down after him, and try to persuade him to behave as sich, if he calls himself a gentleman and a sportsman. But he's obstinate as a Norwich sow; and all he does is to d—n Charles in heaps for having let the vixen's brush slip again.

'Out with her!' says he.

'It's a vixen, sir, and in cub,' says Charles.

'Can't help that—all the more blood for the hounds,' says the master. 'Fish her out!'

'I can't reach her, sir,' says Charles, putting his arm in, and winking at me.

'Will you try for me?' says Winstanley to Jeffries of the Moss Farm.

'I'd rather not, sir, if you'll excuse me,' says he. 'I shouldn't like it myself if I was a mother.' And they all laughed at the master; but he was not to be beat.

'I'll have her out myself,' says he, and dismounts.

'Good God, man!' says Squire Gorham, 'take your hounds off, and give the poor devil fair law, anyhow.' For they had all followed up at the master's heels, and were smelling hungrily round the drain-hole.

'If you or some one else will get the fox out for me, I'll call them back a bit. There's Charles and the second whip not long enough in the arm to reach her. Where's the pick?' But some one had just then hid the pick out of the way, over the hedge.

'I'll see you hanged first for a bloodthirsty poacher. You're fit for nothing but to go back to the city where you came from, and keep a cat's-meat shop,' says the Squire, who had a trick of speaking his mind when he lost his temper.

"Young Winstanley made as though he didn't hear what was said, or the laugh about it; for he kneels down and grips the vixen's brush and pulls her up to the mouth of the drain. 'Shame!' hallooed a dozen of 'em;

and Gorham and Forster and some of 'em flogged away at the hounds to keep them back; but of course it was no use, they were on to her like lightning, all in worry.

"I never but that once heard a fox cry out when the hounds seized him; but she did—a yelping snarling wail, quite different to the calling bark of a fox in a cover at night. She was crying out for her unborn young.

"Some folks don't like to see a fox broken up. I never mind it; but I wouldn't look at her, nor would any of us. We turned short away before the worry was over, one and all of us; but I noticed that Winstanley had caught a smartish bite on the hand in the scrimmage, and the blood was running a good one.

"As you may suppose, opinions were vented pretty strongly by the field, as we one and all rode home, without so much as a look or a good-night to the master. Indignation seemed rather to increase than wear itself out, while the subject was discussed during the next few days. Though the destruction itself of the vixen was a gross and unsportsman-like piece of conduct, it was not so much that that incensed the public as the cool and insulting disregard of the wishes of the field in the matter which Winstanley had displayed. If such dictation and bullying were to be the terms of having the country hunted at the price of a mere nominal subscription for earth-stopping, the sooner the Hunt returned to the old system, and reopened their purse-strings, the better. The field numbered but twenty strong at most the next two hunting-days, and before a week had elapsed a round robin was sent in to the master, civilly suggesting that he should vacate the country.

"Winstanley's innate obstinacy was not likely to teach him to yield in the matter. He wrote an angry refusal, expressing his determination to hunt the country, and to bring

his hounds out just the same, even though he and his whips were to be the only persons in the field; and on the Saturday following, so far as we can make out, he, hearing that a meeting of the Hunt, of which no notice had been sent to him, was to be held that evening here in Market Dawdle, set out to ride over and attend it himself. But he never got there: late in the evening he was brought home dead, his skull fractured behind the ear by a fall from his horse. The toll-keeper at the Lych-gate and his daughter said that they saw the accident just within sight of the gate, opposite the very drain where the vixen had been dug out a few days before. They said that the horse swerved violently, reared over on to Winstanley, and he never moved again.

"As they came up to him in the dark, something darted out into the road, with fiery eyes, white fangs, and a bushy tail, and vanished in the middle of the road. This was what the horse had shied at. For many years afterwards folks used to say that the ghost of that vixen and her whelps used to haunt the road above the Lych-gate. I can't say that I ever saw her; but I know of many that said that they did, though she has not been seen that I know of since Sir Alan has taken the country."

"Have just one 'nother go of this rum, young man," says old Dan; and we winked again at each other as we drank it down, hot and strong.

'It was past ten o'clock before I mounted the old mare again in the inn-yard. I rode out of the town, and left the lights behind me twinkling in the distance, and reached the top of the Warren-hill on the Loughboro'-road. I suppose I must have taken the wrong turn somewhere there in the dark; for the next village I reached, some six miles on, did not seem to me anything like Much Sutton, where Ned's farm lay.

I pulled up as I passed a carrier's cart, and asked where I was.

"Where be you, meister?" says he; "why, close agin Little Stoke. Where might you be makin' for tonight?"

"Much Sutton I want to go to," said I. "How far off am I?"

"Much Sutton! Lord, where have you come from?"

"Market Dawdle."

"Lord help us! You should have turned to the right at Warren-hill. You're a good eight mile," says he, "to the bad. You must take the first turn to the right outside the town, and the next turn to the right after that, and then hold on till you come to the Lych-gate, at the cross-roads; and then you had better ask again. Sit still," says he; "sit stiddy, man;" and I jogged on.

'It was just as well that the old mare had not had a hard day of it; so I pricked her up a bit, and slung along at a goodish trot to the first turn at the right, and the next after that. Then there comes a steepish hill, if you know the country there, sir, and the wind did whistle mortal cold along the top of it.

'As luck would have it, I'd filled up my pocket-pistol with some more of that excellent rum before I left Market Dawdle; and it came in most acceptable, as I unscrewed the flask and drained it.

'It warmed me well inside, and when I got to the bottom of the pitch I saw a light half a mile in front, which I supposed to be the Lych-gate; but I felt uncommon tired and mortal sleepy, and the wind whistled till it seemed to sing the queerest tunes I ever heard, through the trees and round my hat.

'I wondered why the deuce the Board of Highways went to the expense of two lights at a time on the turnpike-gate, as I came near to it; when all of a sudden the old mare stopped short with a snort, and I looked up, and, s'elp me bob, sir,

if there wasn't at least fifty little devils grinning at me from the gate, and one bigger devil than all the rest bowing and smirking bang in front of me, with a lantern in his hand and an apron on, just like a mortal toll-keeper, but with a nose and ears like old Nick himself, and you never saw such claws!

"'Pon my life, I don't know how I got home.

'Next day Ned said to me,
"It's lucky, old boy, that the big drain keeps those ditches dry, and the old mare knows her way home of her own accord, or you might have bided and been drowned all the world over, before I should have thought of coming out to look after you. It's a mortal bad plan to mix your liquors after a long day in the cold."

THE WEDDING-RING

Only a well-worn hoop of gold,
Unlit by any glow
Of rainbow-gem, a ring that told
Its story long ago.

Only a circlet dimm'd and thin
With wedded years of life,
Whose memories cloud my soul
within
With sorrow-shaded strife.

Only a cincture clasping fast
Two separate lives in one,
That calls to mind the sunny
Past,
Yet leaves me still alone.

Only a relic of the joy
In days no more to be,
Of thoughts Regret alone can
cloy,
Never again for me.

Only a treasure from the hand
No more to rest in mine,
But pass'd into the voiceless land,
Beyond the hills divine.

Only a pledge of mutual love,
Of love that ne'er shall fade,
Though Death has call'd those lips
above
That sacred plightings made.

Only an earnest of the troth
Nor Time nor aught can bend,
But ever still will bind us both
Unwavering to the end.

Small as the circlet is, it bound
All-close her love to mine.
Now *she* is gone, but steadfast round
My soul its pledges twine.

Never again its gold shall thread
Her yielding finger's snow;
Never—not e'en when graves their
dead
Have loosed from sleep below.

Never again! But as one thought,
In realms of perfect peace,
Our hearts shall beat, with rapture
fraught,
When Death gives me release.

C. ERNEST HENSLEY, B.A.

THREE GHOSTS

BY FLORENCE MARRYAT (MRS. ROSS CHURCH), AUTHOR OF 'VÉRONIQUE,'
'PETRONEL,' ETC. ETC.

I HAVE never seen a ghost, although I have always entertained a great respect for them, and a strong desire to cultivate their personal acquaintance; indeed, I may say I have courted it, though hitherto without any signal success. Yet from the time when, as a child, I listened open-mouthed to the superstitious revelations of my nurse, or, as a girl, watched by night in anxious expectation of the reappearance of companions whom I had lost by death, to the present hour when the rough handling of the world leaves me slight leisure for speculative thought, the supernatural has always held great charms for me; and I have never presumed to disbelieve what I have no power to disprove.

Of course I am well laughed at for my credulity. People who would rush shrieking from their rooms if they heard the scratching of a mouse behind the wainscot, shake their heads compassionately if I venture to air my unpopular notions in their presence, and refuse to credit me with any faith in my own assertion; whilst others, too thick-headed to penetrate even the finer sympathies of *this* life, affirm stoutly that a woman of sense should be above giving vent to such opinions, and that it is perfectly incredible that any one should really believe such utter nonsense.

How can I refute such conclusive arguments? That I firmly believe the inhabitants of another world are permitted to revisit this, I will not say, because I have never had ocular proof of such a circumstance; but at the same time I have received

such unanswerable testimony of the fact from the lips of others—trustworthy, sensible, and nearly connected with myself—that to deny the possibility of such visitations were at once to write down some of my dearest friends as fools or liars. And therefore I maintain the middle course, by believing that the spiritual is far nearer the temporal sphere than most of us imagine; and that there are more things in this world than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

Numerous anecdotes rise up in my memory as I make this assertion; but my space is limited, and I choose but three—three strictly true and well authenticated.

At the same time, whilst I preserve all details and coincidences in which the mystery of these stories consists, I carefully hide the names of persons and places, lest by negligence in this respect I should wound the feelings of survivors. And as to dates, it is sufficient to say that they are no time-worn fables, handed down from one ear to another, but circumstances which happened in this modern nineteenth century to actors of the present generation, and in the very midst of the rapid march of civilisation and enlightenment which has, in most cases, scattered superstition to the winds.

Let me begin with that which occurred under my own knowledge.

Years ago, a regiment, with the members of which I was intimately connected, was ordered upon foreign service,—upon a service of danger, and the women were left behind. It was a sad parting, as every one

may imagine; but as none except those who have seen husbands torn from their wives, and children from their parents, with all the chances of war against their meeting again, can fully realise. Amongst those to whom I allude, who were thus separated, was a certain Captain Gilbert and his wife. They had not been married long, and she was expecting her first confinement; in consequence of which he had been anxious that she should join her own friends or his during the period of their separation. But she was determined to remain where she was, or rather where I was; for we were just about to move, and she had decided to follow us to our new home. She had taken a fancy to be near me in her time of trial, and nothing would dissuade her from the idea.

The regiment sailed; and shortly afterwards we left our old place of residence, and Mrs. Gilbert went with us and established herself in a little cottage close to our house. At first all went well. She was young and full of hope; the accounts from the seat of war were good; Captain Gilbert continued in excellent health; and she had a fresh prospect of happiness before her.

So that after a few weeks she recovered her health and spirits, became interested in her new abode, and never mentioned the future except in terms of hope and confidence. Neither was she nervous on her own account, nor given in any degree to timid fears; but went about like other people, enjoying society in a quiet way, and without the least doubt but that her husband would be spared to return to her.

The disturbed state of the seat of war prevented her receiving letters quite so regularly as she should have done; but they contained very cheering news when they did come, which those from our own correspondents corroborated. It was April when

the regiment sailed; and until July, nothing occurred to disturb the equanimity of Mrs. Gilbert.

On the twenty-seventh of that month, however, I was waked very early in the morning by the announcement that a messenger had arrived from her with a note for me. The note was scribbled in pencil and very brief: it only contained the words, 'Pray come.'

I hurried on my things, fearing she was ill, and ran through the early dawn (it was not more than four o'clock) to her little cottage. When I reached there, I found her still in bed, but sitting up and staring at the opposite wall with a strange mixture of fear and incomprehensibility upon her face.

'Adelaide,' I exclaimed, 'what is the matter?—are you ill?'

'George has been here,' she answered in a voice as strange as her look; 'he has been sitting in that chair all night;' pointing to one by her bedside.

Of course I disbelieved her—we generally do disbelieve anything which we cannot understand. I thought that she had been dreaming, or was feverish—anything but that she spoke the words of truth and soberness; and I told her so.

'What nonsense, Adelaide! You must have fancied it. Don't you feel well? Are you in any pain?'

But Mrs. Gilbert was impatient of my incredulity.

'I tell you that George sat in that chair by my bedside all night,' she repeated; 'and that I lay here and watched him. He had his uniform on; but I could not see his face, because he kept it hidden in his hands. At first I thought it must be fancy, and I got out of bed and sat in the chair myself, and threw my clothes on it; but directly I lay down again, I saw him as distinctly as before. And I am sure something has happened to him,—that he is dead.'

I sat down by her side, and held her hand and tried to reason with her, but it was of no use; she was quite certain that she was correct.

'See! I have written it down in my pocket-book,' she said; and she drew the book in question from under her pillow and showed me the entry—'George sat by my bedside all last night,' written opposite the date of the 27th of July.

'I show it to you,' she added, 'so that you may not think by and by that it was not entered at the time.'

I reminded her how cheerful the letters from the regiment were, how certain they seemed of a speedy return, and how well Captain Gilbert had kept his health; but it was of no use. She would not part with her conviction; and fearing lest it might have a bad effect upon her delicate situation, I resolved to remain with her during the following night.

We were to sleep together; but we got little rest. As soon as the lights were extinguished and I had composed myself, I was roused by her assertion that her husband had returned, and was sitting in the same chair as he had done on the night before. I sat up in the bed, but I could see nothing; the whole room was dark, excepting where the moonbeams struggled through the window-blind.

'Adelaide, I assure you it is only fancy,' I said emphatically; 'and you will make yourself ill if you give way to such folly.' And then I got up and lighted a candle, and placed it on a table which stood behind the identical chair.

'You are close to him now,' said Mrs. Gilbert, staring at the bright candle-light. 'I can see every ornament on his uniform, every button on his coat. George, George! O, if he would but turn his face round and look at me!'

I jumped into bed again, not half liking my proximity to the supposed

apparition; but still fully believing that my friend's condition had in some way affected her head.

'You will laugh at this some day with Captain Gilbert,' I said confidently; and yet, as I lay awake all night holding her hand, it was terrible, every now and then, in answer to the question if she were more comfortable, to hear her pathetically sigh, 'O no! he is still there; I am looking at him for the last time. If he would only turn his head this way!'

The following day she was so ill that the doctor was called in, and he decided that she must not pass any more nights alone, but have a nurse at once to attend and look after her; and by the next evening a jolly round-faced Englishwoman, who looked as though her merry eyes were sufficient of themselves to scare away all thoughts of anything 'uncanny,' was ready to hold a vigil with me. I did not go to bed that night. I sat up by Mrs. Gilbert's side, whilst she lay quiet as before, and said her eyes were fixed upon the figure of her husband.

The nurse, notwithstanding her jolly appearance, did not seem to think it such nonsense as I did. She pooh-poohed the idea before her mistress, as in duty bound; but confided to me privately her belief that 'the poor dear gentleman would never lie down in his own bed again;' for which I sternly rebuked her ignorance.

I went home during the daytime, but returned on the fourth night to the assistance of my friend. But so far as her late fancy was concerned, it was not needed. Mrs. Gilbert did not see her husband again, and after a few hours' watching, fell off peacefully to sleep.

'And she won't never see him again neither! Mark my words,' oracularly quothe the nurse. 'Whatever it is, them three days have finished it, and it's all over.'

And without believing in an approaching disaster, I hoped that her words might come true.

But after that day, although Mrs. Gilbert seldom mentioned the circumstance I have related, and never showed any fear of being left alone, her spirits seemed to have evaporated, and she lapsed into a melancholy quite unlike her former cheerfulness. The letters which she received continued to be hopeful and even gay; but she appeared to have lost all anticipation for the future. She even left off making any preparations for the little creature whose advent was now expected very shortly, and she never spoke of either her husband or her child. All her friends attributed her demeanour to weakened health; and those most interested were looking forward to the coming event as the grand cure for all her ills. In this way we lapsed into September; and with the first week of that month arrived a letter from her husband to mine; a circumstance which had never occurred before, and rather surprised us.

Captain Gilbert wrote hurriedly, on the eve of his departure for a few days' leave, and enclosed a letter for his wife.

'If Adelaide should be well over her confinement,' he said, 'give her the enclosed; but if the event has not yet occurred, keep it until she is recovered again.' And then he went on to speak of indifferent subjects.

This letter (which had been written at the beginning of July, but, owing to the disturbed state of the postal communication, had been delayed on its road) appeared the more inexplicable to us, when we found that Mrs. Gilbert had heard by the same mail, and nothing could have seemed brighter than the prospects of her husband. However, our business was to obey his wishes; and the mysterious enclosure was there-

fore laid aside until the proper time for its delivery arrived. Meanwhile another fortnight elapsed, and a little son was born to Mrs. Gilbert, in the possession of whom she rejoiced but sixteen hours; but whose loss she took as quietly as though she had never expected it to be otherwise. This event, and the subsequent attendance in her sick-room, threw quite a gloom upon our little household; which reached its crisis when, ten days after the baby's birth, we received letters from the regiment to officially announce the death of Captain Gilbert. At first I could hardly believe it. I had almost forgotten the circumstance of the 27th July, and it seemed too cruel a blow to have to announce to the childless mother, still lying weak and ill upon her bed.

But Mrs. Gilbert had known the mail was expected on that day. She was anxious and eager to receive her letters, and the doctor decided it would be less dangerous to break the news to her at once than to keep her in suspense. And so they deputed me to carry the ill tidings.

I knew not what to say or do; but I entered the sick chamber with the fatal letter crumpled in my pocket, and a face of grave concern. Mrs. Gilbert was sitting up in bed for the first time, and as I appeared she looked eagerly towards me.

'Give me the letter!' she said quickly.

'There is no letter for you, dear,' I replied. And then, as I was searching in my mind for some words in which to break the news to her, she exclaimed:

'I know what you have come to tell me: he is dead! I have known it all along; he died upon the 27th of July!'

Then all the circumstances I have detailed rushed back upon my memory; and pulling the letter from my pocket, I read over the contents with her. In the surprise and dis-

tress of hearing of Captain Gilbert's death, I had forgotten to be curious about particulars ; but she was perfectly correct. He had left the seat of war for a few days' change on the 20th of July ; had been unexpectedly taken ill a week afterwards ; become unconscious on the 25th, and expired on the 27th ; which was the first night that she had seen him. And when she opened the letter which he had sent under cover to my husband, though written before any symptoms of his last illness had appeared, it proved to contain his final wishes and directions for the guidance of herself and child, transcribed, as he himself said, under a strong presentiment that they should never meet again.

My story has nothing to do with the grief that followed, which was of necessity great. Its pith lies in the question which, whilst I put it, I know to be unanswerable : if the appearance of spirits is an impossibility, what was it that sat by Mrs. Gilbert's bedside from the 27th to the 29th of July ? Had her imagination alone supplied the vision, it could scarcely have supplied the date. But I shall make no comment on this or either of my tales. My province is simply to relate them just as they occurred.

A near relation of mine (let us say a sister) was staying with a friend, a Mrs. Long, during the absence of her husband. The place at which she was visiting, a large country-house surrounded by a fine park, was situated in Scotland, and the husband of her hostess had gone to Edinburgh on business, by which he expected to be detained for two or three weeks. One afternoon, as my sister was sitting alone, Mrs. Long entered the room with an air of great perturbation, declaring that the strangest thing possible had just occurred to her. She had been taking a solitary ramble in the park, which was surrounded by a high

fence and deep ditch, when she saw, from some distance off, her husband riding on horseback along the road. Surprised to see him at all, and particularly in that situation, yet quite certain that it was himself, she stood on some rising ground to watch his approach, which had been successfully accomplished until he drew near the park ; when, instead of turning into the drive, which was the longest way to the house, he suddenly checked his horse and put him at the palings. She had seen the animal rise in obedience to the spur, clear the fence ; but jumping short of the ditch beyond it, fall with her husband under him. But when, with a cry of dismay, she had rushed up to the assistance of the struggling horse and rider, she had found—nothing ! The whole vision had passed away, and there was only a high park fence and a quiet ditch lying before her. Mrs. Long was very agitated whilst relating this occurrence. She did not imagine it foreboded any ill to her husband, to whom she was much attached ; but she fancied her own sight or mind must be disordered ; and it was some time before my sister could soothe her alarm, and make her view it in what *she* considered a more reasonable light. But by the evening Mrs. Long was quite herself again, and wrote off a cheerful account of the proceeding to her husband. Two days after, however, the same thing happened over again ; precisely the same thing, as to time, place, and circumstance. Mrs. Long, walking in the park, and perhaps attracted to the spot on account of her former alarm, watched her husband approach on horseback from a distance ; make as though he would enter by the drive, and then, apparently changing his mind, put his horse at the palings, and be crushed beneath the fallen struggling animal. As in the former case, irresistibly she ran up to his aid ; as in the former case, the whole picture,

as though by magic, disappeared. This time Mrs. Long was seriously frightened. She did not fear that the vision portended her husband's death; but she so far accepted it as a foreboding, that she wrote to Edinburgh, entreating Mr. Long on no account to return on horseback; a warning which seemed very unnecessary, as he invariably went backwards and forwards by train. But that epistle, as it afterwards appeared, never reached the hand for which it was intended.

On the succeeding day she received a few lines from her husband, to say he should be home that evening; and on the same afternoon she took my sister into the park, to show her the exact spot where she had twice experienced so mysterious a fright. They talked of presentiments and warnings on the way; but Mrs. Long was so happy in the anticipation of her husband's speedy return, that she was conversing without any appearance of timidity upon the subject, when, as they came to the rising ground before mentioned, she raised her eyes, changed colour, and suddenly arrested her footsteps.

'Helen!' she exclaimed, mentioning my sister's name. 'Look!—look out there! I see the same thing again!'

My sister glanced in the direction intimated to her, and there, sure enough, she also saw the spectacle of a man riding on horseback along the turnpike road, and apparently making for her friend's abode, but still too far off to be distinctly recognised.

'My dear Mary,' she replied, 'that may be any one—a farmer or a servant. I see no marks by which to distinguish your husband.'

But Mrs. Long did not answer her; she was staring at the fast-approaching rider, and my sister was fascinated, by what she had heard, to watch with her in silence.

On, on he came, just as had been described to her, in a quick canter,

as though anxious to reach his home, until he had arrived at the drive-gates, and was about to enter them.

Then he seemed to change his mind, to form a sudden wish to reach wife and children a few minutes earlier; and backing his horse, spurred him at the palings. At this juncture, Mrs. Long grasped my sister's arm; but she did not speak, and they continued to gaze silently at this apparition, so strangely revealed to both of them at once.

They watched the phantom horse and rider rise above the fence, and then fall heavily into the ditch below, the animal above the man, and struggling violently to get free of him. Firmly believing it was but a repetition of what the wife had viewed twice before, they yet involuntarily ran up to the spot; when, instead of a myth, a vision, a mere presentiment, which should vanish at a second glance, they found a real horse lying on its side, a real man lying *dead beneath him!* Mr. Long, having at the last moment accepted a friend's invitation to stay a night at his place, which lay between his own home and Edinburgh, had also accepted the loan of an animal to carry him for the last few miles—the last miles that he should ever traverse.

What faculty in the wife's mind enabled her to see twice over an act which had not yet entered into the husband's mind to execute?

My next story will possess more interest for most of my readers, because it happened to my father.* He was not usually accounted to have (what the nurses term) 'any buttons short;' nor was he a particularly nervous or timid man; yet I have heard what I am about to relate from his own lips.

In one of the northern counties of England there stands an estate which I shall call Burnham-green.

* Captain Marryat, the celebrated novelist.—ED. B. A.

It had been for many years in the possession of an old bachelor baronet, Sir Joseph Bell, who had not occupied the house, but allowed it to fall into decay. When he died, however, the title and place passed to a married cousin, and better days dawned for Burnham-green. Sir Harry and Lady Bell intended to live upon their property, and, with that design, thoroughly repaired and decorated the building and grounds, gave up their residence in London, and moved all their household into Cumberland.

Now Burnham-green, in common with most dilapidated country places, had its 'ghost.' Sir Harry and Lady Bell had heard of it before taking possession, and, like most sensible people, had laughed at the report, and allowed it to make no difference in their plans. Every old house, as a matter of consequence, has its ghost; and they were not afraid but that light and warmth and children's voices and happy faces would dissipate even the remembrance of theirs. They surrounded Burnham-green with luxury and amusement, filled the house with guests, and never gave the 'ghost' another thought. But with all their hospitality and kindness, they could not succeed in making their new abode attractive to their friends. People who accepted their invitations with alacrity, thought Burnham-green charming, and themselves scarcely less so, would, after a while, make paltry excuses to curtail their visits, and, with few exceptions, were found shy of being lured down there again.

Lady Bell was naturally both hurt and annoyed. She had made her house and grounds everything that could be desired, and yet her friends refused to share her retirement, or to give her any plausible excuses for not doing so. What could be the reason of it?

Inquiry was made, and then it transpired that the fashionable visit-

ors had all heard of the ghost, chiefly through their ladies'-maids; that some had even professed to see it, and none could be persuaded to remain under the same roof with it any longer. Then Sir Harry and Lady Bell, who had regarded the ghost-story as quite unworthy the attention of educated people, were thoroughly vexed, and did all they could to remove the superstition respecting it which hung over the neighbourhood. They disinterred the whole history of the ghost, who went by the name of 'the Lady of Burnham-green,' and found that it was supposed to be the spirit of one of their ancestresses who had lived in the time of Elizabeth, and been suspected of poisoning her husband, whose picture also hung in one of the unused bedrooms.

Lady Bell caused that bedroom to be renovated and fitted-up in a particularly cheerful manner; the painting of 'the Lady' was cleaned and put in a new frame, and the apartment set in complete order.

But no one could be found to sleep in it. The servants gave warning if it was simply proposed to them, and visitors invariably requested to have their room changed after the second or third night.

Meanwhile, reports of the 'Lady' having been seen in one direction and another were constantly cropping up. Guest after guest took flight to return no more, and Burnham-green was almost deserted. In this dilemma, Sir Harry and Lady Bell applied to my father, who was an old friend of theirs, for advice how to allay the terrors of their friends. My father disbelieved the tale as much as they did. He found it impossible to contradict or account for the various reports which were floating about; but he felt quite sure they could be traced to the most natural of causes, and his chief idea was, that some one, to whose interest it had not been that Burnham-

green should be re-inhabited, was playing a trick on its new owners, in hopes of persuading them to quit it again. He requested Sir Harry, therefore, to allow him to occupy the haunted room for a little while, to see if he could unravel the mystery; and accordingly not long afterwards he went on a visit to his friends, and was duly installed in the 'Lady's chamber,' where he slept peacefully for some nights, taking the precaution, however, never to go to bed without a brace of loaded pistols under his pillow.

I believe he had been there for a week or more, without seeing or hearing anything, and was thinking of returning home again, when the following incident occurred to him. It was the shooting-season, and several young men were staying at Burnham-green; and in the smoking-room one evening a discussion arose on the merits of a certain gun then newly invented, and which was the property of a Mr. Lascelles, a relation of Sir Harry's. Opinions differed on the subject, and arguments ran rather high; and after my father had retired for the night, Mr. Lascelles tapped at the door, and begged him to come over to his room to examine the weapon in question, and convince himself of some trifling fact on which he had thrown discredit.

My father had already dispossessed himself of his coat and waist-coat; but the hour was much past midnight; it was unlikely they should meet any one; and so he accompanied his young friend as he was, taking, at the same time, one of his pistols in his hand—'in case we meet the ghost,' he said jestingly. They crossed the corridor to Mr. Lascelles' room, stood chatting for a few minutes over the virtues of the new gun, and then my father stepped out again into the passage, preparatory to returning to his own apartment.

Mr. Lascelles still accompanied him—'just to protect you from the ghost,' he said, in imitation of the former allusion; for the ghost-story had been well handled and laughed over in the smoking-room. The corridor they had to traverse was long and dark, for the lamps which hung in its deep niches had been extinguished at midnight; but as they entered it, they saw a dim light advancing from the farther end—a light held by a female figure.

'By Jove!' exclaimed Mr. Lascelles, 'here is one of the ladies going up to the nurseries.'

There were a few unsuspecting guests assembled at Burnham-green that autumn, and the rooms in which their little families were located were situated above the story on which the friends stood. At Mr. Lascelles' remark, my father's sensitive modesty took alarm. He did not fancy meeting a lady to whom he was almost a stranger in the *déshabille* of shirt and trousers; and, with the design of escaping her notice, he pulled his companion to one side.

The rooms in the corridor were placed opposite each other, and were approached by double doors, the first of which, on being opened, disclosed a small entry and the second door, which led to the bedchamber itself. Many persons, on entering their rooms, only closed this second door, leaving the other standing open; and thus, when Mr. Lascelles and my father stepped into one of these recesses, they were enabled to shelter themselves behind the half-closed portal.

There, in the gloom, they crouched together, very much inclined to laugh, I have no doubt, at the situation in which they found themselves, but terribly afraid lest by a betrayal of their illegal presence they should alarm the occupant of the bedroom before which they stood, or the lady who was advancing to the place of their concealment.

Very slowly she advanced, or so it seemed to them; but they could watch the glimmer of her lamp through the crack of the door; and presently my father, who had pertinaciously kept his eye there, gave the half-smothered exclamation,

'Lascelles! By Jove!—*the Lady!*'

He had studied the picture of the supposed apparition carefully, was intimate with every detail of her dress and appearance; and felt that he could not be mistaken in the red-satin sacque, white stomacher and petticoat, high-standing frill and cushioned hair of the figure now advancing towards them.

'A splendid "make-up,"' he said beneath his breath; 'but whoever has done it shall find I know a trick worth two of his.'

But Mr. Lascelles said nothing. Imposition or not, he did not like the looks of the Lady of Burnham-green.

On she came, quiet and dignified, looking neither to the right nor to the left; whilst my father cocked his pistol, and stood ready for her. He expected she would pass their

place of hiding, and intended to pursue and make her speak to him; but instead of that, the dim light gained the door, and then stood still.

Lascelles shuddered. He was a brave man, but sensitive. Even my father's iron nerves prompted him to be quiescent.

In another moment the lamp moved on again, came closer, closer; and round the half-closed door, gazing inquisitively at them, as though really curious to see who was there, peered the pale face and the cruel eyes of the Lady of Burnham-green.

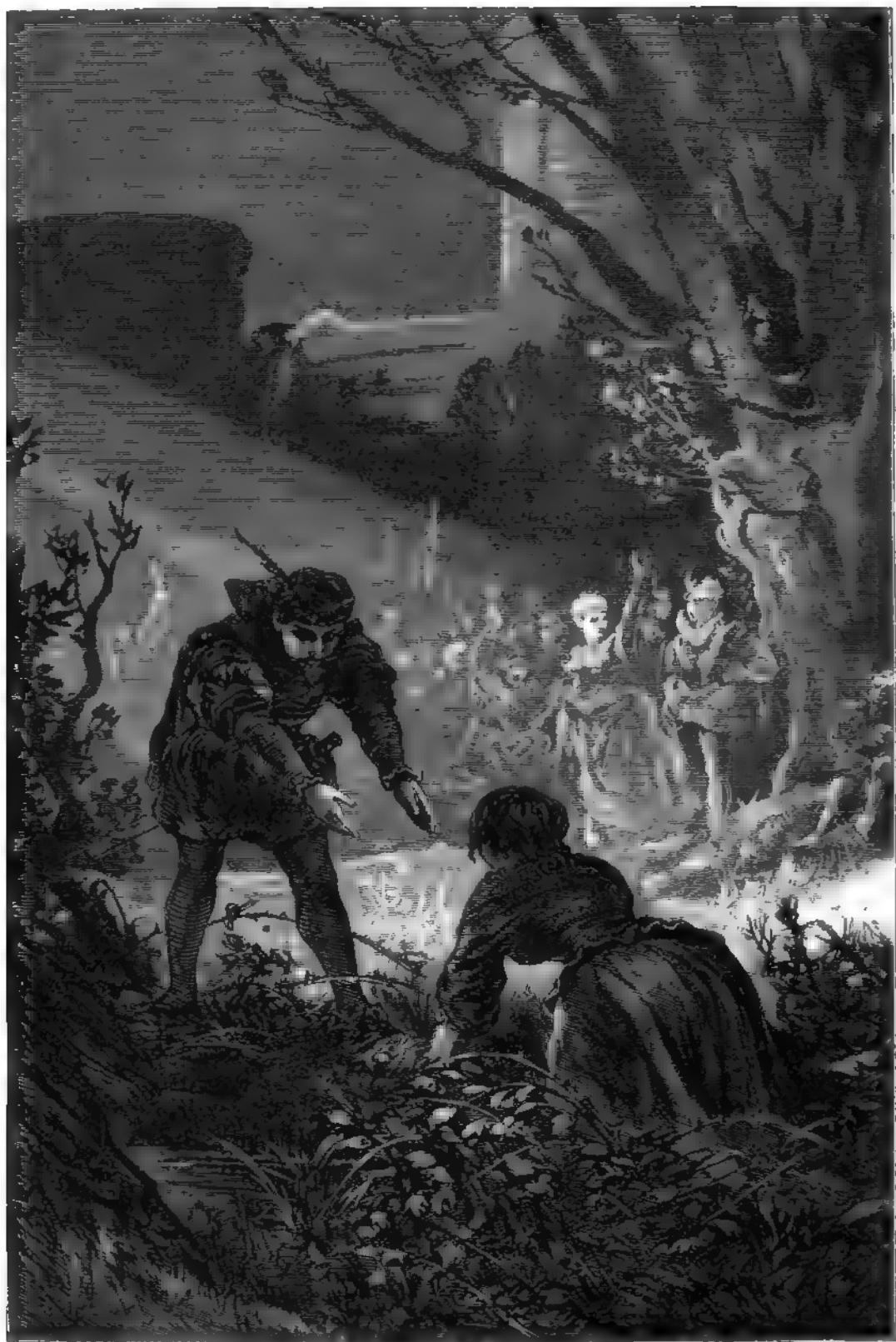
Simultaneously my father pushed open the door and confronted her. She stood before him in the corridor, just as she stood in the picture in his bedroom, but with a smile of malicious triumph on her face; and, goaded on by her expression, hardly knowing what he did, he raised his pistol and fired full at her. The ball penetrated the door of the room opposite to where they stood; and with the same smile upon her face she passed through the panels and disappeared.

A CHARADE

WHEN autumn dyes the trees with gold,
And every leaf grows yellow,
Right luscious am I to behold—
My blood is rare and mellow:
It was a king of pleasant France
By whom my sires were christen'd,
The while his joyous countenance
With thirsty pleasure glisten'd.

And I, who quench'd the monarch's thirst
In garden-walks of Paris,
Am sprung entirely from my first,
Which still within me tarries.
As for my second—'tis a thing
Unknown to those old gay days,
Whose use perpetual seems to bring
Much pleasure to the ladies.

MORTIMER COLLINS.



E. Wagner, del.

F. Kemplan, sc.

LAURA EDDERELL'S VISION OF THE FAIRIES.

LAURA SILVER BELL

BY J. S. LE FANU, AUTHOR OF 'UNCLE SILAS,' ETC.

In the five Northumbrian counties you will scarcely find so bleak, ugly, and yet, in a savage way, so picturesque a moor as Dardale Moss. The moor itself spreads north, south, east, and west, a great undulating sea of black peat and heath.

What we may term its shores are wooded wildly with birch, hazel, and dwarf-oak. No towering mountains surround it, but here and there you have a rocky knoll rising among the trees, and many a wooded promontory of the same pretty, because utterly wild, forest, running out into its dark level.

Habitations are thinly scattered in this barren territory, and a full mile away from the meanest was the stone cottage of Mother Carke.

Let not my southern reader who associates ideas of comfort with the term 'cottage' mistake. This thing is built of shingle, with low walls. Its thatch is hollow; the peat-smoke curls stingily from its stunted chimney. It is worthy of its savage surroundings.

The primitive neighbours remark that no rowan-tree grows near, nor holly, nor bracken, and no horseshoe is nailed on the door.

Not far from the birches and hazels that straggle about the rude wall of the little enclosure, on the contrary, they say, you may discover the broom and the rag-wort, in which witches mysteriously delight. But this is perhaps a scandal.

Mall Carke was for many a year the *sage femme* of this wild domain. She has renounced practice, however, for some years; and now, under the rose, she dabbles, it is thought, in the black art, in which she has always been secretly skilled, ten^t fortunes,

practises charms, and in popular esteem is little better than a witch.

Mother Carke has been away to the town of Willarden, to sell knit stockings, and is returning to her rude dwelling by Dardale Moss. To her right, as far away as the eye can reach, the moor stretches. The narrow track she has followed here tops a gentle upland, and at her left a sort of jungle of dwarf-oak and brushwood approaches its edge. The sun is sinking blood-red in the west. His disk has touched the broad black level of the moor, and his parting beams glare athwart the gaunt figure of the old beldame, as she strides homeward stick in hand, and bring into relief the folds of her mantle, which gleam like the draperies of a bronze image in the light of a fire. For a few moments this light floods the air—tree, gorse, rock, and bracken glare; and then it is out, and gray twilight over everything.

All is still and sombre. At this hour the simple traffic of the thinly-peopled country is over, and nothing can be more solitary.

From this jungle, nevertheless, through which the mists of evening are already creeping, she sees a gigantic man approaching her.

In that poor and primitive country robbery is a crime unknown. She, therefore, has no fears for her pound of tea, and pint of gin, and sixteen shillings in silver which she is bringing home in her pocket. But there is something that would have frightened another woman about this man.

He is gaunt, sombre, bony, dirty, and dressed in a black suit which a beggar would hardly care to pick out of the dust.

This ill-looking man nodded to her as he stepped on the road.

'I don't know you,' she said.

He nodded again.

'I never sid ye neyawheere,' she exclaimed sternly.

'Fine evening, Mother Carke,' he says, and holds his snuff-box toward her.

She widened the distance between them by a step or so, and said again sternly and pale,

'I hev nowt to say to thee, who-e'er thou beest.'

'You know Laura Silver Bell?'

'That's a byneyam; the lass's neyam is Laura Lew,' she answered, looking straight before her.

'One name's as good as another for one that was never christened, mother.'

'How know ye that?' she asked grimly; for it is a received opinion in that part of the world that the fairies have power over those who have never been baptised.

The stranger turned on her a malignant smile.

'There is a young lord in love with her,' the stranger says, 'and I'm that lord. Have her at your house to-morrow night at eight o'clock, and you must stick cross pins through the candle, as you have done for many a one before, to bring her lover thither by ten, and her fortune's made. And take this for your trouble.'

He extended his long finger and thumb toward her, with a guinea temptingly displayed.

'I have nowt to do wi' thee. I nivver sid thee afoore. Git thee awa'! I earned nea goold o' thee, and I'll tak' nane. Awa' wi' thee, or I'll find ane that will mak' thee!'

The old woman had stopped, and was quivering in every limb as she thus spoke.

He looked very angry. Sulkily he turned away at her words, and strode slowly toward the wood from which he had come; and as he ap-

roached it, he seemed to her to grow taller and taller, and stalked into it as high as a tree.

'I conceited there would come something o't,' she said to herself. 'Farmer Lew must git it done nesht Sunda'. The a'ad awpy!'

Old Farmer Lew was one of that sect who insist that baptism shall be but once administered, and not until the Christian candidate had attained to adult years. The girl had indeed for some time been of an age not only, according to this theory, to be baptised, but if need be to be married.

Her story was a sad little romance. A lady some seventeen years before had come down and paid Farmer Lew for two rooms in his house. She told him that her husband would follow her in a fortnight, and that he was in the mean time delayed by business in Liverpool.

In ten days after her arrival her baby was born, Mall Carke acting as *sage femme* on the occasion; and on the evening of that day the poor young mother died. No husband came; no wedding-ring, they said, was on her finger. About fifty pounds was found in her desk, which Farmer Lew, who was a kind old fellow and had lost his two children, put in bank for the little girl, and resolved to keep her until a rightful owner should step forward to claim her.

They found half-a-dozen love-letters signed 'Francis,' and calling the dead woman 'Laura.'

So Farmer Lew called the little girl Laura; and her *sobriquet* of 'Silver Bell' was derived from a tiny silver bell, once gilt, which was found among her poor mother's little treasures after her death, and which the child wore on a ribbon round her neck.

Thus, being very pretty and merry, she grew up as a North-country farmer's daughter; and the old man, as she needed more looking after, grew older and less able to take care of her; so she was, in fact, very nearly

her own mistress, and did pretty much in all things as she liked.

Old Mall Carke, by some caprice for which no one could account, cherished an affection for the girl, who saw her often, and paid her many a small fee in exchange for secret indications of the future.

It was too late when Mother Carke reached her home to look for a visit from Laura Silver Bell that day.

About three o'clock next afternoon, Mother Carke was sitting knitting, with her glasses on, outside her door on the stone bench, when she saw the pretty girl mount lightly to the top of the stile at her left under the birch, against the silver stem of which she leaned her slender hand, and called,

'Mall, Mall! Mother Carke, are ye alone all by yersel'?

'Ay, Laura lass, we can be clooas enoo, if ye want a word wi' me,' says the old woman, rising, with a mysterious nod, and beckoning her stiffly with her long fingers.

The girl was, assuredly, pretty enough for a 'lord' to fall in love with. Only look at her. A profusion of brown rippling hair, parted low in the middle of her forehead, almost touched her eyebrows, and made the pretty oval of her face, by the breadth of that rich line, more marked. What a pretty little nose! what scarlet lips, and large, dark, long-fringed eyes!

Her face is transparently tinged with those clear Murillo tints which appear in deeper dyes on her wrists and the backs of her hands. These are the beautiful gipsy-tints with which the sun dyes young skins so richly.

The old woman eyes all this, and her pretty figure, so round and slender, and her shapely little feet, cased in the thick shoes that can't hide their comely proportions, as she stands on the top of the stile. But it is with a dark and saturnine aspect.

'Come, lass, what stand ye for atoppa t' wall, whar folk may chance to see thee? I hev a thing to tell thee, lass.'

She beckoned her again.

'An' I hev a thing to tell thee, Mall.'

'Come hidder,' said the old woman peremptorily.

'But ye munna gie me the creepin's' (make me tremble). 'I winna look again into the glass o' water, mind ye.'

The old woman smiled grimly, and changed her tone.

'Now, hunny, git tha down, and let ma see thy canny feyace,' and she beckoned her again.

Laura Silver Bell did get down, and stepped lightly toward the door of the old woman's dwelling.

'Tak this,' said the girl, unfolding a piece of bacon from her apron, 'and I hev a silver sixpence to gie thee, when I'm gaen away heyam.'

They entered the dark kitchen o the cottage, and the old woman stood by the door, lest their conference should be lighted on by surprise.

'Afoore ye begin,' said Mother Carke (I soften her patois), 'I mun tell ye there's ill folk watchin' ye. What's auld Farmer Lew about, he doesna get t' sir' (the clergyman) 'to baptise thee? If he lets Sunda' next pass, I'm afeared ye'll never be sprinkled nor signed wi' cross, while there's a sky aboon us.'

'Agoy!' exclaims the girl, 'who's lookin' after me?'

'A big black fellah, as high as the kipples, came out o' the wood near Deadman's Grike, just after the sun gaed down yester e'en; I knew weel what he was, for his feet ne'er touched the road while he made as if he walked beside me. And he wanted to gie me snuff first, and I wouldna hev that; and then he offered me a gowden guinea, but I was no sic awpy, and to bring you here to-night, and cross the candle wi' pins, to call your lover in. And

he said he's a great lord, and in luve wi' thee.'

'And you refused him?'

'Well for thee I did, lass,' says Mother Carke.

'Why, it's every word true!' cries the girl vehemently, starting to her feet, for she had seated herself on the great oak chest.

'True, lass? Come, say what ye mean,' demanded Mall Carke, with a dark and searching gaze.

'Last night I was coming heyam from the wake, wi' auld farmer Dykes and his wife and his daughter Nell, and when we came to the stile, I bid them good-night, and we parted.'

'And ye came by the path alone in the night-time, did ye?' exclaimed old Mall Carke sternly.

'I wasna afeared, I don't know why; the path heyam leads down by the wa'as o' auld Hawarth Castle.'

'I knaa it weel, and a dowly path it is; ye'll keep indoors o' nights for a while, or ye'll rue it. What saw ye?'

'No freetin, mother; nowt I was feared on.'

'Ye heard a voice callin' yer neyame?'

'I heard nowt that was dow, but the hullyhoo in the auld castle wa's,' answered the pretty girl. 'I heard nor sid nowt that's dow, but mickle that's conny and gladsome. I heard singin' and laughin' a long way off, I consaited; and I stopped a bit to listen. Then I walked on a step or two, and there, sure enough, in the Pie-Mag field, under the castle wa's, not twenty steps away, I sid a grand company; silks and satins, and men wi' velvet coats, wi' gowd-lace striped over them, and ladies wi' necklaces that would dazzle ye, and fans as big as griddles; and powdered footmen, like what the shirra hed behind his coach, only these was ten times as grand.'

'It was full moon last night,' said the old woman.

'Sa bright 'twould blind ye to look at it,' said the girl.

'Never an ill sight but the deaul finds a light,' quoth the old woman. 'There's a rinnin brook thar—you were at this side, and they at that; did they try to mak ye cross over?'

'Agoy! didn't they? Nowt but civility and kindness, though. But ye mun let me tell it my own way. They was talkin' and laughin', and eatin', and drinkin' out o' long glasses and goud cups, seated on the grass, and music was playin'; and I keekin' behind a bush at all the grand doin's; and up they gits to dance; and says a tall fella I didna see afoore, "Ye mun step across, and dance wi' a young lord that's faan in luv wi' thee, and that's mysel'"; and sure enow I keeked at him under my lashes, and a conny lad he is, to my teyaste, though he be dressed in black, wi' sword and sash, velvet twice as fine as they sells in the shop at Gouden Friars; and keekin' at me again fra the corners o' his een. And the same fella telt me he was mad in luv wi' me, and his fadder was there, and his sister, and they came all the way from Catsteane Castle to see me that night; and that's t'other side o' Gouden Friars.'

'Come, lass, yer no mafflin; tell me true. What was he like? Was his feyace grimed wi' sut? a tall fella wi' wide shouthers, and lukt like an ill-thing, wi' black clothes amaint in rags?'

'His feyace was long, but weel-faured, and darker nor a gipsy; and his clothes were black and grand, and made o' velvet, and he said he was the young lord himsel'; and he lukt like it.'

'That will be the same fella I sid at Deadman's Grike,' said Mall Carke, with an anxious frown.

'Hoot, mudder! how cud that be?' cried the lass, with a toss of her pretty head and a smile of scorn.

But the fortune-teller made no answer, and the girl went on with her story.

'When they began to dance,' continued Laura Silver Bell, 'he urged me again, but I wudna step o'er; 'twas partly pride, coz I wasna dressed fine enough, and partly contrairiness, or something, but gaa I wudna, not a fut. No but I more nor half wished it a' the time.'

'Weel for thee thou dudstna cross the brook.'

'Hoity-toity, why not?'

'Keep at heyame after nightfall, and don't ye be walking by yersel' by daylight or any light lang lone-some ways, till after ye're baptised,' said Mall Carke.

'I'm like to be married first.'

'Tak care that marriage won't hang i' the bell-ropes,' said Mother Carke.

'Leave me alone for that. The young lord said he was maist daft wi' luv o' me. He wanted to gie me a conny ring wi' a beautiful stone in it. But, drat it, I was sic an awpy I wudna tak it, and he a young lord!'

'Lord, indeed! are ye daft or dreamin'? Those fine folk, what were they? I'll tell ye. Dobies and fairies; and if ye don't du as yer bid, they'll tak ye, and ye'll never git out o' their hands again while grass grows,' said the old woman grimly.

'Od wite it!' replies the girl impatiently, 'who's daft or dreamin' now? I'd a bin dead wi' fear, if 'twas any such thing. It cudna be; all was sa luvesome, and bonny, and shaply.'

'Weel, and what do ye want o' me, lass?' asked the old woman sharply.

'I want to know—here's t' six-pence—what I sud du,' said the young lass. "'Twud be a pity to lose such a marrow, hey?'

'Say yer prayers, lass; I can't help ye,' says the old woman darkly. 'If ye gaa wi' the people, ye'll never come back. Ye munna talk wi' them, nor eat wi' them, nor drink wi' them, nor tak a pin's-worth by way o'

gift fra them—mark weel what I say—or ye're *lost!*'

The girl looked down, plainly much vexed.

The old woman stared at her with a mysterious frown steadily, for a few seconds.

'Tell me, lass, and tell me true, are ye in luve wi' that lad?'

'What for sud I?' said the girl with a careless toss of her head, and blushing up to her very temples.

'I see how it is,' said the old woman, with a groan, and repeated the words, sadly thinking; and walked out of the door a step or two, and looked jealously round. 'The lass is witched, the lass is witched!'

'Did ye see him since?' asked Mother Carke, returning.

The girl was still embarrassed; and now she spoke in a lower tone, and seemed subdued.

'I thought I sid him as I came here, walkin' beside me among the trees; but I consait it was only the trees themsels that lukt like rinnin' one behind another, as I walked on.'

'I can tell thee nowt, lass, but what I telte ye afoore,' answered the old woman peremptorily. 'Get ye heyame, and don't delay on the way; and say yer prayers as ye gaa; and let none but good thoughts come nigh ye; and put nayer foot autside the door-steyan again till ye gaa to be christened; and get that done a Sunda' next.'

And with this charge, given with grizzly earnestness, she saw her over the stile, and stood upon it watching her retreat, until the trees quite hid her and her path from view.

The sky grew cloudy and thunderous, and the air darkened rapidly, as the girl, a little frightened by Mall Carke's view of the case, walked homeward by the lonely path among the trees.

A black cat, which had walked close by her—for these creatures sometimes take a ramble in search of their prey among the woods and thickets—crept from under the hol-

low of an oak, and was again with her. It seemed to her to grow bigger and bigger as the darkness deepened, and its green eyes glared as large as halfpennies in her affrighted vision as the thunder came booming along the heights from the Willarden-road.

She tried to drive it away ; but it growled and hissed awfully, and set up its back as if it would spring at her, and finally it skipped up into a tree, where they grew thickest at each side of her path, and accompanied her, high over head, hopping from bough to bough as if meditating a pounce upon her shoulders. Her fancy being full of strange thoughts, she was frightened, and she fancied that it was haunting her steps, and destined to undergo some hideous transformation, the moment she ceased to guard her path with prayers.

She was frightened for a while after she got home. The dark looks of Mother Carke were always before her eyes, and a secret dread prevented her passing the threshold of her home again that night.

Next day it was different. She had got rid of the awe with which Mother Carke had inspired her. She could not get the tall dark-featured lord, in the black velvet dress, out of her head. He had 'taken her fancy ;' she was growing to love him. She could think of nothing else.

Bessie Hennock, a neighbour's daughter, came to see her that day, and proposed a walk toward the ruins of Hawarth Castle, to gather 'blaebirries.' So off the two girls went together.

In the thicket, along the slopes near the ivied walls of Hawarth Castle, the companions began to fill their baskets. Hours passed. The sun was sinking near the west, and Laura Silver Bell had not come home.

Over the hatch of the farm-house door the maids leant ever and anon with outstretched necks, watching

for a sign of the girl's return, and wondering, as the shadows lengthened, what had become of her.

At last, just as the rosy sunset gilding began to overspread the landscape, Bessie Hennock, weeping into her apron, made her appearance without her companion.

Her account of their adventures was curious.

I will relate the substance of it more connectedly than her agitation would allow her to give it, and without the disguise of the rude Northumbrian dialect.

The girl said, that, as they got along together among the brambles that grow beside the brook that bounds the Pie-Mag field, she on a sudden saw a very tall big-boned man, with an ill-favoured smirched face, and dressed in worn and rusty black, standing at the other side of the little stream. She was frightened ; and while looking at this dirty, wicked, starved figure, Laura Silver Bell touched her, gazing at the same tall scarecrow, but with a countenance full of confusion and even rapture. She was peeping through the bush behind which she stood, and with a sigh she said :

' Is na that a conny lad ? Agoy ! See his bonny velvet clothes, his sword and sash ; that's a lord, I can tell ye ; and weel I know who he follows, who he loves, and who he'll wed.'

Bessie Hennock thought her companion daft.

' See how livesome he luks ! ' whispered Laura.

Bessie looked again, and saw him gazing at her companion with a malignant smile, and at the same time he beckoned her to approach.

' Darrat ta ! gaa not near him ! he'll wring thy neck ! ' gasped Bessie in great fear, as she saw Laura step forward, with a look of beautiful bashfulness and joy.

She took the hand he stretched across the stream, more for love of the hand than any need of help, and

in a moment was across and by his side, and his long arm about her waist.

'Fares te weel, Bessie, I'm gain my ways,' she called, leaning her head to his shoulder; 'and tell gud Fadder Lew I'm gain my ways to be happy, and may be, at lang' last, I'll see him again.'

And with a farewell wave of her hand, she went away with her dismal partner ; and Laura Silver Bell was never more seen at home, or among the 'coppies' and 'wickwoods,' the bonny fields and bosky hollows, by Dardale Moss.

Bessie Hennock followed them for a time.

She crossed the brook, and though they seemed to move slowly enough, she was obliged to run to keep them in view ; and she all the time cried to her continually, 'Come back, come back, bonnie Laurie !' until, getting over a bank, she was met by a white-faced old man, and so frightened was she, that she thought she fainted outright. At all events, she did not come to herself until the birds were singing their vespers in the amber light of sunset, and the day was over.

No trace of the direction of the girl's flight was ever discovered. Weeks and months passed, and more than a year.

At the end of that time, one of Mall Carke's goats died, as she suspected, by the envious practices of a rival witch who lived at the far end of Dardale Moss.

All alone in her stone cabin the old woman had prepared her charm to ascertain the author of her misfortune.

The heart of the dead animal, stuck all over with pins, was burnt in the fire; the windows, doors, and every other aperture of the house being first carefully stopped. After the heart, thus prepared with suitable incantations, is consumed in the fire, the first person who comes to the

door or passes it by is the offending magician.

Mother Carke completed these lonely rites at dead of night. It was a dark night, with the glimmer of the stars only, and a melancholy night-wind was southing through the scattered woods that spread around.

After a long and dead silence, there came a heavy thump at the door, and a deep voice called her by name.

She was startled, for she expected no man's voice; and peeping from the window, she saw, in the dim light, a coach and four horses, with gold-laced footmen, and coachman in wig and cocked hat, turned out as if for a state occasion.

She unbarred the door ; and a tall gentleman, dressed in black, waiting at the threshold, entreated her, as the only *sage femme* within reach, to come in the coach and attend Lady Lairdale, who was about to give birth to a baby, promising her handsome payment.

Lady Lairdale ! She had never heard of her.

'How far away is it ?'

'Twelve miles on the old road to Golden Friars.'

Her avarice is roused, and she steps into the coach. The footman claps-to the door ; the glass jingles with the sound of a laugh. The tall dark-faced gentleman in black is seated opposite ; they are driving at a furious pace ; they have turned out of the road into a narrower one, dark with thicker and loftier forest than she was accustomed to. She grows anxious ; for she knows every road and by-path in the country round, and she has never seen this one.

He encourages her. The moon has risen above the edge of the horizon, and she sees a noble old castle. Its summit of tower, watch-tower and battlement, glimmers faintly in the moonlight. This is their destination.

She feels on a sudden all but over-powered by sleep; but although she nods, she is quite conscious of the continued motion, which has become even rougher.

She makes an effort, and rouses herself. What has become of the coach, the castle, the servants? Nothing but the strange forest remains the same.

She is jolting along on a rude hurdle, seated on rushes, and a tall, big-boned man, in rags, sits in front, kicking with his heel the ill-favoured beast that pulls them along, every bone of which sticks out, and holding the halter which serves for reins. They stop at the door of a miserable building of loose stone, with a thatch so sunk and rotten, that the roof-tree and couples protrude in crooked corners, like the bones of the wretched horse, with enormous head and ears, that dragged them to the door.

The long gaunt man gets down, his sinister face grimed like his hands.

It was the same grimy giant who had accosted her on the lonely road near Deadman's Grike. But she feels that she 'must go through with it' now, and she follows him into the house.

Two rushlights were burning in the large and miserable room, and on a coarse ragged bed lay a woman groaning piteously.

'That's Lady Lairdale,' says the gaunt dark man, who then began to stride up and down the room, rolling his head, stamping furiously, and thumping one hand on the palm of the other, and talking and laughing in the corners, where there was no one visible to hear or to answer.

Old Mall Carke recognised in the faded half-starved creature who lay on the bed, as dark now and grimy as the man, and looking as if she had never in her life washed hands or face, the once blithe and pretty Laura Lew.

The hideous being who was her mate continued in the same odd fluc-

tuations of fury, grief, and merriment; and whenever she uttered a groan, he parodied it with another, as Mother Carke thought, in sardonic derision.

At length he strode into another room, and banged the door after him.

In due time the poor woman's pains were over, and a daughter was born.

Such an imp! with long pointed ears, flat nose, and enormous restless eyes and mouth. It instantly began to yell and talk in some unknown language, at the noise of which the father looked into the room, and told the *sage femme* that she should not go unrewarded.

The sick woman seized the moment of his absence to say in the ear of Mall Carke :

'If ye had not been at ill work tonight, he could not ha' fetched ye. Tak no more now than your rightful fee, or he'll keep ye here.'

At this moment he returned with a bag of gold and silver coins, which he emptied on the table, and told her to help herself.

She took four shillings, which was her primitive fee, neither more nor less; and all his urgency could not prevail with her to take a farthing more. He looked so terrible at her refusal, that she rushed out of the house.

He ran after her.

'You'll take your money with you,' he roared, snatching up the bag, still half full, and flung it after her.

It lighted on her shoulder; and partly from the blow, partly from terror, she fell to the ground; and when she came to herself, it was morning, and she was lying across her own door-stone.

It is said that she never more told fortune or practised spell. And though all that happened sixty years ago and more, Laura Silver Bell, wise folk think, is still living, and will so continue till the day of doom among the fairies.



D. H. Friston, del.

Edmund Evans, sc.

THE DOCTOR'S SPELL.

DR. DEADSHOT AND HIS LITTLE CONSIGNMENT

BY WALTER THORNBURY

I. THE AVATAR OF THE DOCTOR.

OUR vessel was ready to start; and Captain Benson, leaning over the side nearest the gate leading into the dock, was looking out eagerly for the last passenger. The cargo was in the hold, the fresh meat and vegetables had just arrived; we only stayed for our one more passenger, and the Black Hawk would slip out of the dock-gates, spread her broad white wings, and begin her long flight to Singapore.

The captain, naturally a bluff irritable kind of man, was losing his temper fast, for the owners, angry at some unavoidable delay in the stowing, had insisted on our sailing on a Friday.

'If that fellow, whatever his name is, don't come in ten minutes more by the clock over the gate,' burst out the captain, 'though his fare is paid, off I go as sure as my name is Robinson. It's bad enough to have to sail on a Friday, without losing another twenty-four hours pottering about here. What is the d— fellow's name, Mr. Rawlins?'

The first mate, who held the list of the passengers and cargo in his hand, being thus appealed to, ran down the paper with his rough brown finger.

'Deadshot (Julius Cæsar), 14 St. Peter's-churchyard, Rotherhithe. Fifty-four barrels of the Immortal Patagonian Pills, for Singapore.'

'Quack, quack!' at that moment went one of the live ducks we had taken on board, at which every one laughed.

'Four minutes past twelve,' cried the captain to the man standing

ready to seize the shore-rope when it should be flung to us. 'Are you ready there, forward?'

'Ay, ay, sir!' shouted the man.

'Stay, here he is—belay there!' cried the captain. At that very moment a black mourning coach, driven by a red-nosed man in black, and drawn by a long bony black horse with a long professional-looking tail, whirled through the gate and drove smartly up towards the vessel.

The door flew open, and out stepped a tall lank person, with a long brown face, and green spectacles bestriding a long German professor's sort of nose. He was dressed in seedy black, and a long blue cloak with a ram's-wool collar, and carried in his hand a large crape hat-band, a new pair of black kid gloves, and a pair of well-worn saddle-bags. After him scrambled out a black servant, carrying a medicine-chest, and a round parcel suspiciously like a pestle and mortar.

'A thousand apologies, honoured sir,' said Dr. Deadshot, for that eminent practitioner it soon proved to be,—'a thousand apologies for my breach of etiquette. Detained by professional engagement; paying the last act of respect to worthy patient who had lived for years—in fact, almost subsisted—on our glorious infusion of the Madagascar squill. Detained the coach to bring me round here. *Diluculo surgere saluberrimum est; emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.* Pardon my addressing you in a learned language, which use has made almost second nature. As Horace says, *Cras ingens iterabimus æquor,*—To-morrow we traverse the great deep. My

dear sir, I am very proud to make your acquaintance.'

So saying, the learned doctor strode up the plank that led into the vessel with the greatest *sang froid*, and shook hands warmly with the captain and all the passengers.

'My fare, sir, if you please!' shouted the driver of the sable vehicle.

The doctor looked round with mild astonishment, not unmixed with regret, at the man's somewhat stern and almost suspicious vehemence.

'Driver,' said he,—'driver of that grave but professional vehicle, you have deserved well of your country; behold your honorarium.'

The driver, beholding only a shilling, grew unbecomingly violent.

'You're a pretty fellow,' said he, following his fare up into the vessel, 'to bring me all the way from Kensal-green cemetery to these 'ere docks for a shilling! Look here. I want five bob, that's what I want; five bob, that's my charge.'

'Observe the violence,' said the doctor, addressing us, 'superinduced by a heated state of the epigastric region, caused by alcoholic excess.—The charge,' he said, turning to the driver, 'at first suggested by cupidity, has been urged with intemperance; on that ground I refuse to pay. Try one of my pills night and morning; agents, Sexton and Co., St. Paul's-churchyard.—Boatswain, remove this clamorous man.—For black eye, probably given you by sailor in act of removal, use our Perpetual Panacea Liniment, three-and-six the bottle; agents, Coffin and Co., Mile-end-road. God bless you; and if for ever, still for ever, fare thee well!'

'What's all this? We can have none of this disturbance here; put that man out of the ship!' cried the captain; and as the driver manifested a desire to inflict injury on the doctor, the driver was instantly hustled down the plank by three robust sailors.

'Don't take none of his stuff, any of you,' shouted the driver from below, red with rage, and shaking his fist at us; 'he's half filled one cemetery already! Yah, quack! yah, old bolus! Where's my four shillings? Cheat a poor driver! I'm ashamed of yer! I only wish I'd broken your scraggy old neck! Yah!'

'See how the excessive use of imperfectly purified spirits,' said the doctor, leaning over the side of the vessel, and appealing to us all, 'deteriorates the whole moral nature. I leave that class of my countrymen with little regret; whereas the inhabitants of Rotherhithe, though lost to sight, will be to memory dear, even though not so unhealthy as medical men of a less philanthropic kind than myself might desire.'

I discovered afterwards that the doctor, in his hurry to benefit fresh parts of the world with his immortal medicines, had forgotten to settle several Rotherhithean accounts.

II. THE STATE CABIN.

THE doctor soon became a favourite with the captain, officers, and passengers. He was chatty, talkative, amusingly pedantic, and full of a Micawberish self-conceit which was as amusing as his profound belief in his Patagonian pills.

'Well, doctor, and what have you been up to all the morning?' said the captain at dinner the tenth day out. 'We heard your pestle going as steady as a clock-beat.'

'I'm trying, captain, to prepare a lozenge, which shall contain within the compass of half a cubic inch the nourishment requisite for three hundred and sixty-five meals. The result of this discovery will be that armies will be able to carry with them the nourishment requisite for a whole campaign; that aeronauts will be able to cruise for several years without revisiting the earth; and that ships may use much of the

room now devoted to provisions for more reimbursing goods.'

'I only wish, doctor, you could invent some pills to kill the infernal cockroaches,' said the captain, behind whose chair I was standing; 'that would be something like an invention! You projectors always fly too high. Every profession has its tricks. Now come, doctor, you don't really mean to tell us that there was ever really a Bishop of Barbadoes cured of an indisposition to all mental exertion by a liberal use of the Patagonian pills? Was there ever a Lord Sleepydon who restored his dilapidated liver of ten years' standing by Patagonian pills? And if the pills sell 14,000,000 boxes a year, pray what are you off to Singapore for?'

'Now then, doctor!' cried all the other passengers.

'Medicine, gentlemen,' said the doctor with exquisite gravity, helping himself to sherry as he spoke, 'is a profession entered upon from other motives than mere cash. I tore myself from Rotherhithe to go to Singapore, induced by that inner voice that sends the patriot to the battle-field, the discoverer to the lonely Pole, the geologist to the mountain crag, the philanthropist to the home of misery. I wish to spread this favoured medicine wherever man has trodden. Wherever man has reared his hut, there the Patagonian pills shall search him out.'

Somebody laughed.

'Yes, I will say, in despite of the sneerer, that if I had means to reach the nearest star—its exact name at this moment I forget—I would ascend even there with the Immortal Patagonian Pill, and disseminate aloft the blessings of this glorious antidote of sorrow and suffering. I would scatter my circulars on every breeze, convinced that wherever they fell, they would waft a heirloom invaluable to posterity, and beneficial to every race. No vessel should pass from any port without

carrying these circulars pasted on its side and sails; the Pyramids—nay, the very Alps—should be impressed with the eloquent words of my Patagonian pill advertisement; on the farthest shores of Africa I would let fly certain pigeons, to whose wings circulars in several negro languages should be attached, to spread its blessings into the centre of that enormous continent. I—'

'Take some more wine, doctor,' said the captain; 'you must be out of breath. Do you ever take your own pills?'

'I take no medicine now,' said the doctor, 'thank God, except dry sherry, the Immortal Pills taken in early youth have so fortified my constitution against all disease. Do you know my ultimate aims, captain, in relation to the Patagonian pills?'

The doctor, having had quite enough wine, was rather more eloquent and diffuse than usual on the subject of his hobby.

'No.'

'Then I will tell you. The establishment in every nation of hospitals where these pills are to be given away gratis to all comers. I would prohibit the use of all other medicines, and should merely demand a small royalty on each box. Any medical man prescribing any other medicine should forfeit his permission to practise. The science thus simplified would make tremendous strides. Death might still knock, as Horace says, with equal hand at the *tabernas pauperum et regumque tresses*; still the duration of human life would be, to say the least, doubled. In a century's time men of eighty would be thought in the first bloom of youth, and persons of one hundred-and-twenty in their prime. Thus the world would go on at a tremendous rate of progress; and all I should ask for would be a statue in every great city in the known globe, a small royalty on every box for the benefit of myself and my

posterity, and my portrait on every lid, out of common gratitude to the inventor.'

'Take some more wine, doctor,' said the cruel captain.—'Mr. Johnson, why do you keep the bottle at your elbow?'

'The secret of these pills,' said the doctor, warming with his subject, 'is that they at once lessen physical decay, and supply all it needs to replace loss by daily wear and tear. The result is an excess over daily expenditure. The hair ceases to fall—'

The captain fixed his eye on a bald region of the doctor's head.

'Yes, true; I began the pills a little too late. The pills prevent decay, but do not replace what is lost, sir. They will not give a man, for example, brains, though they will prevent a diminution of cerebral force. The use of these pills should be compulsory. The benefited nation, taking so wise a precaution, would never reproach the well-intentioned government that advocated, urged, and finally enforced the scheme. Sick-ness would disappear; the sexton would bury his useless spade; every one's temper would improve; and universal litigation would change to universal benevolence. No more soldiers, no more lawyers, no more sextons, no more—'

Here the doctor rose to give force to his sentence, but finding himself unsteady, seized at the table-cloth for assistance; the result of which was, that he eventually nearly dragged down all the decanters and glasses, but was prevented by a simultaneous haul on the part of the captain opposite and his right and left man; upon which the doctor challenged to mortal combat every one who denied the infallibility of the Royal Immortal Patagonian Pills, and calling out, 'Steward, your arm,' took hold of me, and with extreme gravity stalked to his cabin, where he instantly turned in.

'A good fellow the doctor, after all,' the captain was saying when I returned; 'and the best of it is, I don't think he really knows he is a humbug.'

'A regular old double-dyed fox, I say; and the men all call him Old Nick's brother-in-law,' said the first mate to a passenger next me, who cordially agreed with him.

III. IN TROUBLE.

WE had been three weeks out—the last week bad weather—when one evening the doctor startled everybody on deck by expressing it as his opinion that the captain was a good deal out of his reckoning. The captain, who was lighting his cigar at the doctor's, puffed furiously at this, then broke out into a scornful laugh.

'Well, come, I like that, doctor! You know a good deal of languages—a plaguey sight more than I ever did or ever shall—you have invented this extraordinary pill that is to kill or cure every one; you tell a good story; you play the violin very handily; but when you come here, and tell me how to navigate my vessel, that is coming it rather too strong.—What do you say, Mr. Rawlings?'

Mr. Rawlings, the mate, laughed bitterly, and remarked it was indeed just a trifle too strong.

The doctor made no reply, but tucked the violin under his chin, and playing a bar or two of 'Caller herring,' that *chef-d'œuvre* of Neil Gow's, laid the violin on his left knee, and began to screw up a refractory string.

'Semper dormitat Homerus,' he said at last coolly; 'excuse a quota-tion from the Latin language; as Pope finely says, "To err is human, to forgive divine." I have been to Singapore before to disseminate the Royal Patagonians, which unfortunately did not go down with the Hindoos as I could have wished; I have also learnt at leisure moments a little navigation; and I tell you,

my worthy and excellent Palinurus, that we've got too far to the west.'

'Too far to the deuce!' said the captain. 'You'll perhaps tell me next you made an observation this very morning.'

'The very observation I was going to make,' said the doctor. 'The sun showed for a moment above meridian. It is from that observation I draw my data. It has been misty since then.'

'O, indeed!' said the captain. 'Perhaps you'd like to take the command.'

'If I took it, my dear sir, I should instantly steer several points to the east; you'll excuse the freedom of my remark.'

'Did you ever hear such a man, Rawlings? Only just hear him!'

'I hear him,' said Rawlings, with due emphasis; 'and I should like to set him reefing in a gale of wind.'

'I daresay you would, my dear young friend; but I should be more useful at the helm.'

'O, I suppose you'll say next you can steer too,' growled the captain.

'Yes, a little. I yachted a good deal when I was establishing my agency at Cuba.'

'Ever been in a gale round the Horn?' inquired the mate.

'Twice. The squills at Patagonia are of the finest description. There I found one ingredient of my pills —no, it was not squills, Mr. Rawlings. We're going to have a rough night of it.'

The captain said nothing, but went on deck. He returned in ten minutes, looking rather grave.

'Rawlings,' said he, 'I have quite decided to steer a point to the east. We're a little out, somehow. The boatswain says there was a land bird on the rigging this morning, and there shouldn't have been. There ought to be no land nearer now than the Incognita Islands.—Steward, you can bring the soup.'

Dinner was just served, and I was rinsing a wine-glass at a side-table,

when the vessel struck heavily on a reef. Such a crash! I thought it was all over with us, and that the vessel was going to break up at once.

The doctor was the only cool person.

'The great coral reef, half a mile off the south-eastern of the Incognita Islands,' he said; and gave the latitude and longitude. 'Thought we were too far west. I'll take a glass of wine, and then take my turn at the pumps.'

IV. ON THE REEF.

THE horror of that scene I will not describe: the rush of frightened men, the frantic toil at the pumps, the roar of the wind, the fury of the breakers that swept over us as the gale began to rise. We had jammed so firm on the reef, that a sharp point of rock filled the hole it had made, and prevented the leak being instantaneously dangerous. If the sea only fell, and we could get out the boats, there was still hope to reach the nearest island, that now showed in a line of surf under the mist that rose for an instant at sunset, and then sank into the darkness. The boats would not live a moment in such a sea. If the vessel lifted off the rock, we should be drowned in a jiffy. We took our turn in gangs at the pumps, and worked like madmen. That was our only hope. About midnight my gang was relieved, and we were advised to turn in; so I and the doctor, quite worn out, went together to get a glass of spirits and any food we could find. As my cabin was under water, the doctor offered me a berth in his.

'If this gale continues,' he said, tucking one long leg over the other, as he munched gravely at a biscuit and some cold meat, 'there won't be a man of us alive in the morning. I know these islands pretty well by description. A brother of mine was once wrecked here, and was kept

some months by the ignorant but hospitable inhabitants. He is now an agent for the Patagonian pills in Constantinople. I learned, indeed, a good deal of the language from him. Thank God, he will continue to spread the blessings of the pills over the world. In these emergencies I always take a Patagonian; I advise you, Davis, to do the same. I do not mind, at this juncture, mentioning that there is a strong narcotic ingredient in them, which at all events will render us unconscious that we are being drowned. I advise you to take a Patagonian; you'll be asleep in five minutes. We sha'n't be wanted yet. Good-night.'

The doctor took a pill, and handed me one. In a few minutes we were both fast asleep.

V. THE DAY AFTER THE STORM.

WHEN I awoke all was quiet as the grave. I rubbed my eyes. The doctor was gone. The wind was down. There was no jangle of voices, no shout of command, no clank at the pumps. The sunlight fell brightly on the doctor's blue cloak with the ram's-wool collar, that hung on a nail by the port-hole. The only sound was the quiet ripple of the sea against the sides of the vessel. I must have been dreaming. But no; there were the crumbs of the doctor's biscuit on the floor, and there were his saddle-bags.

In a moment I leaped up, and ran into the next cabin. There was no one—only an empty spirit-bottle and a telescope. As I stood there, dumb with astonishment at the apparent desertion of the vessel and the subsidence of the storm, I heard some one in the saloon playing 'Hope told a flattering tale,' followed by a bar or two of the 'Bay of Biscay.' I ran into the room, and found the doctor sitting alone, with all the dignity of a chairman, at the head of the long table. A decanter of sherry stood by his side, and he was all the

better for the glass or two he had evidently taken.

'Davis,' said he, 'sole companion, partner of my fame, we are deserted. The scoundrels have left us here on the wreck all blooming alone. As I always sleep with one ear open, I heard them letting out the boats, and went to take my place and book one for you. They took off the money and the ship's papers, but, I need scarcely say, left the Patagonian pills—the greatest treasure of all, the incomparable pills—behind to perish. I waved my lily hand. The captain, worthy fellow, wanted to put back; but the sailors cried out that I was the Jonah that had done all the mischief, that I was old Harry himself, and other offensive language too numerous to mention. The mate also, in the second boat, would have waited for me; but that matchless rascal my black servant shouted that I had poisoned ever so many people at Stratford-le-Bow, and that I was running away from justice, which is an infernal lie; for the pills agreed with everybody but one old churchwarden, who revenged himself by never paying his bill. So here we are; but it's calm, my boy, and I am at the helm. It's only half a mile to shore; the materials for a raft are at hand; we can get the Royal Immortal Patagonian Pills out of the hold; and the inhabitants here restrict themselves, except on certain festivals, to a fish diet. Come, we must be stirring, for fear the wind rises again. I intend to represent myself to the inhabitants as a great magician, sent by the sea-gods to reign over them.—N.B. I have reason to suppose there is gold to be found in the island. I shall represent the pills as securing those who take enough of them from every mortal disease. My young friend, I shall sell every one of them for three hundred times its weight in gold-dust. Such is my programme. Come

to the raft—to the raft. If the resources of social life are cut off from us, the treasures of hope are still our own.'

Nothing could damp the doctor's courage, or restrain his loquacity. In a very short time we had constructed a serviceable raft of spars, to which we lashed all the valuables we could find, some provisions, and a suit of uniform that had belonged to one of the passengers. We then, by a good deal of wading in the hold, fished up fifteen barrels of the Patagonians, and lashed them to the sides of the raft. We managed to rig a small mast with a square sail; and the doctor was delighted. As we drifted slowly towards land, my extraordinary friend played 'Rule Britannia,' with all the unction of his eccentric nature.

As we approached the land, a band of chiefs, dressed not unlike South-Sea Islanders, with plumes of parrot's feathers, and robes of matting, descended a sand-hill that sloped to the beach.

'Now's the time,' said the doctor, never at a loss. '*Robur et æs triplex*, Davis, which means in English, Keep up your pluck. Give me that uniform. They must take me for a creature of another planet. They always choose their kings this way. The last they had was a black cook, from a Spanish wreck, who drank himself to death after a glorious reign of fat pork and incessant intoxication. That's right. Now the violin. The march from *Artaxerxes* will impress them. All you have to do is to keep a good look-out, and fall on your nose, to show respect, every time I speak to you. Turn on the telescope now, and see what they are up to. I wish we had brought more pills. I only hope those rascals who deserted us are all drowned.'

VI. COCOROCO.

I TURNED the telescope on, and saw the six chiefs, the moment they ob-

served us, throw down their spears and war-clubs, and prostrate themselves on the sand. I told the doctor this, and he instantly commenced a lively movement on the violin, expressive of joy. We had now got so near the land that we could leap ashore. Having first lashed a rope to the raft, and drawn it up safe, the doctor in full fig, with cocked-hat and resplendent epaulettes, stepped on land, and commenced 'Would you win the gentle creature?' from *Acis and Galatea*, expressive of peace and good-will.

The chiefs advanced, crawling on hands and knees, and refused to rise till the doctor spoke to them in their own language, and announced himself as having come from a country east of the sun, and west of the moon, to bring them a precious medicine that saved from any wounds in battle all those who took enough of them.

The chiefs instantly hailed him with great applause, as one whom they venerated and feared, and were at once employed to carry the pills and the rest of our goods.

'All right, Davis,' said the doctor, interpreting as it went on all that he said. 'We'll get to windward of them now. Down on your nose directly I speak. I've slightly altered the programme of the pills, but they're good for every mortal thing. All we want is some of their gold, and time to get to the chief island of the group, where vessels from Singapore often touch. In my opinion we have made a very good first step. I'll give 'em "Jenny Jones" now, to express quiet contentment.'

One of the chiefs, running on before, just as we approached the principal town of the island—a huge circle of huts formed of matting, roofed with palm-branches—soon came back, followed by an enormous procession of men, beating on drums and waving spears.

'My violin will produce an im-

mense effect on them,' said the doctor to me, 'as I believe they have no instruments but those infernal drums, and a sort of flageolet they make out of a shark's backbone; not a successful instrument.—N.B. I believe the pork here is very good, and though a meat difficult of digestion, we will try a roast leg this very night, or I'm not king of Cocoroco, or whatever else they call the misguided place. The only thing I dread here is the envy of the local medical man.'

The doctor was right. From the very first the great physician of the place regarded us with suspicion, though we kept hard at work exchanging the pills for gold-dust. He was a little old malign one-eyed fellow, with a bad temper and a game leg. He, however, never won over a single chief to his side, and was generally regarded as a mere infidel, for despising a person sent specially by Providence as a legislator and ruler.

At the first great Pow-wow, or congress, the doctor delivered a lecture on the pills that produced a profound sensation. He translated it to me afterwards.

'Great people of Cocoroco,' he said, 'I have brought you the medicine and the music of the country beyond the sun. The pills not only beneficially affect the liver, brain, heart, stomach, and general digestive system, but they also drive off all disease, prevent any wounds being mortal, and, if taken in sufficient quantities, extend life to an almost illimitable duration. Forbidden by the laws of the land beyond the sun to disclose these secrets without reward, I hereby offer to play this divine instrument to any rich man of the island for a pound of gold-dust, and to barter every one of these pain-destroying, long-life-producing pills for two pounds of the same commodity. The pills that prevent any one dying at all, I only dispose of for one hundred pounds of gold dust.'

I could see the little doctor swelling with envy. He rose when the acclamations were over and a tribute of three hundred pigs had been presented to the new king, and spoke.

'Men of Cocoroco,' he said, 'we are told much of these pills, brought by this stranger drifted upon our shore. Allipelago, the great sweet-cane planter, bought three of these pills, that prevent any one dying; one was for himself, and the others for his two wives.'

'We know it,' cried many voices.

'Allipelago, the same night, in his joy, gave a feast to all his tenants. At that feast Allipelago and Calipash, having drunk too much palm-wine, fell out, and fought with clubs.'

The doctor looked at me, and said, 'I don't much like this, Davis; I have always suffered from professional jealousy.'

'They fought with clubs,' went on the speaker, 'and the result was the severe fracture of Allipelago's skull, who now lies dead as the herring that is red.'

The doctor in his excitement paraphrased the doctor's remarks.

'Allipelago is outside the tent now; any one can see him, and this is the result of the stranger's pill. Men of Cocoroco, it was the Evil Spirit, and not the Good, that sent this man here. Seize him!'

But no one seized the doctor; who, after a bar or two of 'Cease, rude Boreas,' denounced his rival as worthy to be hung for a detractor and a cheat.

'There has been some mistake,' he said, 'gentlemen. My servant Davis here must have taken a pill from the wrong cask. Moreover, I doubt Allipelago's having taken the pill at all.'

'I saw him swallow it,' said the rival; 'and he told me what he had given for it. If the pills have this virtue, let the doctor swallow one before us, and then fight our great warrior Sayeroo. Let him prove

that Sayeroo's club is unable to wound the consumer of this vaunted medicine. Mark this supposed magician. You see, he wavers. Seize him! I denounce him!

The people wavered. The doctor saw it, and seizing his violin, was beginning, 'I am the boy for bewitching them,' when his rival tore the violin from his hands, and leaping on it, scrunched it to pieces.

'The spell is broken!' cried the doctor's enemy; 'it all lay in that. He is harmless now. I knew from the beginning the Evil Spirit had sent him.'

'*Eheu jugaces, Davis!*' groaned the doctor, as they seized him. 'Perhaps I asserted too much for the Royal Patagonians. I was hoping we should get away before any one died. The incomparable virtue of these pills will now be for ever doubted in the island of Cocoroco. Of all the spiteful rascals—but I do think he was really afraid of the violin—O, I should like to have the doctoring of that fellow!'

The doctor's eloquence and soft-sawder were all in vain. He had scarcely had time to fill his pockets with half-a-cask of pills and some gold-dust, when we were both bound and led off towards the shore, not half a mile from where we had landed.

'They are going to drown us!' I cried to the doctor, half dead with fear.

'O no,' said he. 'They proposed that at first, but now they talk of tying us up in two palm-trees for the night. To-morrow they will hold two great public dinners round us—a lemon and a knife and fork to each man. Then they'll light two big fires, and shake us down for roasting. But don't be afraid. A friend of ours, whose daughter I was going to marry, and whom the incomparable pills really cured of a bad fever, is going to be left as our sentinel. He is afraid of me, and

I'll threaten him with every disease I can think of if he does not free us at night. If that won't do, you must persuade him to take a pill—I'll tell you how—if that sets him asleep, as it ought, we are safe. Here's the pill; mind, produce it when I tell you—but not till then.'

Our cruel enemy saw us mount the palm-trees with the greatest composure. Rings of lemons were placed round each tree, and fires laid ready for lighting. The sentinel the doctor had mentioned was placed to guard us, armed with spear and club.

'Men from the land beyond the sun,' said the Archbishop of Cocoroco, waving his crosier at us, 'you say you were sent to rule over us. If that was so, the sea will send a ship to-night to save you. If not, we shall offer you up to-morrow to the manes of Allipelago, and eat you afterwards. I think, perhaps, that will be a warning to you. Good-night.—Badego, keep good ward.'

This struck me as rather melodramatic language; but that was the doctor's mode of translating, and he was of a theatrical, Micawberish, and romantic turn of mind.

VII. UP A TREE.

We were in a dreadful position—in a savage country, perched up in two trees, to be made a meal of in the morning. But, somehow or other, I had seen so much of the doctor's extraordinary shrewdness and readiness of resource, that I felt that, by some device, he would extricate me and himself from this peril; and even when the chiefs left us alone with our guard just at moonrise, I could hardly repress a smile as I saw that lank figure in uniform curled up like a great roosting flamingo in the middle of the branches of a palm-tree. We were very near together, and were able to enter at once into conversation.

'I regret, Davis,' said the doctor,

'that I had not supplied myself with several articles that might have been useful at this juncture. If I had three things now—some squibs, some crackers, and some phosphorus—I would tell that Badego such enormous lies, and so frighten him, that he would instantly let us escape. I would first rub this cerebral covering called a cocked-hat with phosphorus till his hair stood on end. I would let off a squib at every sentence, till he went into fits, and then drop down a dozen crackers; and if that didn't make him believe in my being sent by Providence to rule over this country, what would? Davis, that march over the sand-hills has made me, my boy, mighty athirst. I'll try to frighten this rascal. I will tell you what I say presently, so that you may know how I am getting on. *O tempora, O mores!* to think of the discoverer of the greatest blessing ever sold to mankind being at the mercy of an illiterate Coco-rocan!'

The doctor then, seriously applying himself to work, threatened Badego that if he did not instantly let us escape, three hundred winged sharks would within half an hour come up from the sea, and destroy Badego and all his countrymen. That failing, a whirlwind, ten minutes after, would rise directly the doctor whistled; followed, in rapid succession, by an earthquake, a volcano, and three inundations. The solar Lord Chancellor and Minister of the Board of Trade were, he said, very angry at his detention, he was so great and useful a magician.

But Badego was inexorable.

'Chowbang no! No, yara! Boodle wing foo! Much threats no hurt,' he replied angrily; which meant, the doctor gloomily told me, that if he, the doctor, was so great a magician, he had better tell the ropes to drop off, and wish himself back in his own country. If he was so great a

magician, he might have known that some men of his country had landed yesterday.

'Crass ignorance! Hear his lies!' said the doctor; 'but now I'll try another tack. He has consulted me once or twice, and I know his weak points. O, if I could only get him to take a Patagonian! He is a hard-hearted brute, and ungrateful as the viper in the fable.—Badego,' he said in a wheedling voice, 'your liver is disordered by too frequent draughts of rice-wine. You are old and shattered; you are gouty, and have a bad cough. You will not live three years. Would you like to know how to prolong your life?'

Badego shook with fear, and gradually came trembling up to the doctor's tree.

'You cured me, king,' he said, 'of one fever. Tell me what to do.'

'Take a Patagonian pill. It will secure you from all disease, and give you a hundred years more of life. A boxful prevents you from dying at all, but there is only one hundred-year pill left.'

'But Allipelago?' suggested Badego, who was evidently wavering.

'He had only taken fourteen, and they weren't the true sort, of which I had only one left, and that belonged to my friend here.'

'Give me that, give me that, and I'll let you go.'

'Davis,' said the doctor, 'he's swallowed the bait, so give him the Patagonian.'

I gave it Badego, who at once swarmed up the tree after it, took it from the indicated pocket, and instantly swallowed it.

'Now, then, cut the ropes,' said the doctor.

'Yang, yang! no, no! No so foolo; no, no, no!' replied the monster, dancing round the trees, club and spear in hand.

'Did you ever in your born days know such a scoundrel?' said the doctor. 'But never mind. Look,

he is getting giddy. He staggers.—Hullo, old boy!—Hurrah! he's down. Here goes!

And in a moment more the doctor, who had long since secretly freed himself of the ropes, slipped down the tree with incredible agility, and tied the arms of the sleeping man. Then he swarmed up my tree, and unloosed my fetters.

'Davis,' said he, 'the Patagonian pills shall still be disseminated in new countries. Those people he speaks of may be part of our crew. We'll make for that light I see down there by the shore. I've a good mind to put an end to this ungrateful rascal' (here he kicked him violently); 'but, no—let the brute live. They'll be sure to knock him on the head when they find us gone. Come; time presses, and we've had almost enough of Cocoroco.'

VIII. THE PILLS REALLY PROVE USEFUL.

At the corner of a belt of palm-trees, about half a mile off, a gruff voice shouted as we approached,

'Who goes there?'

'Davis,' said the doctor proudly, 'that voice is the voice of Robinson the boatswain, hoarse with rum, but harmonised by honesty.—Hullo here, Robinson! We're friends — Dr. Deadshot, inventor of the Patagonian pill, and John Davis, late steward of the Black Hawk.—Davis, be kind enough to join me in "Rule Britannia."'

Robinson, delighted at our escape, instantly led us to some rough tents, built up with spars and sails, where we found the captain and the crew—all very jolly considering—except the doctor's black servant and the cook, who, drinking too much rum, had fallen out of the cutter, and been drowned.

'Doctor,' said the captain, 'you find us in an awful fix. There is a Chinese junk a mile off, come here to buy opium, and they can't

get any. They won't take us off but on one condition—ten pounds of opium; and we haven't saved even the medicine-chest.'

The doctor ruminated for a moment.

'Friend Palinurus,' he exclaimed, 'it is no time to hoard up in one's own bosom the secrets of science. The Patagonian pills, I may now disclose, are three parts opium, the remaining third being composed of herbs from Tierra del Fuego, and a mineral, procured at enormous expense from the North Pole. The casks now in the wreck will supply the honorarium for passage demanded by these proud and mercenary barbarians. Put off the boats, and let us seek the matchless treasure; not saying a word, not breathing, in fact, a syllable, about the necessary adulteration, as they would, perhaps, irreverently call it.'

The captain's jaw fell.

'Doctor,' said he, 'we have recovered a few things from the wreck, especially my chest, &c.; but last night, the last fragment of the wreck disappeared, and nothing has since been washed on shore but one very acceptable cask of rum, which accounts for our present apparent contentment. These Chinese fools are off the day after to-morrow, and we are lost.'

'Not so, my dear sir,' said the doctor, 'I am proud to say. There are still under the fireplace of my house at Cocoroco eleven casks of the Royal Patagonians buried. We have but to obtain a guard of armed Chinese sailors, and the casks are easily recoverable. Every cask of Patagonians contains at least five pounds of the required drug; and so join us in "A life on the ocean wave," and respect the versatility of the scientific mind even when hard drove.'

At the moment of the doctor's fourth glass, the boatswain, followed by six of the men, entered the tent, and, with many rough bows and

winks, said that the ship's company would be glad to drink the doctor's health, and many happy returns of the day.

'Ungrateful herd!' said the doctor, rising and shaking his right hand at them. 'But I forgive you. The world is like that. Still, henceforth leave a place in the boat, my countrymen, for scientific men in distress; and may the toast of "Never desert a friend in need," be ever remembered at your midnight repast. The discoverer of the Royal Immortal Patagonian Pills, when expiring, will have at least one proud satisfaction—that of thinking that if he has made some serious mistakes in medicine—and who has not?—he has at last nobly atoned for them by saving the band of twenty-eight' (there were only fourteen) 'brave British seamen he now sees before him, from the cruel and, when provoked, anthropophagous inhabitants of Cocoroco. Gentlemen and fellow sailors, in proposing the health of our excellent captain, let me couple with it the army and navy for ever—hurrah for the red, white, and blue! and though fathoms five our good ship lies, with old England on the lee, let us rejoice to think, yea, let it be our pride to remember, that, though beset by enemies, we never raised our hand against a woman, and never lost a feeling of love for the British Constitution. Three times three for the House of Lords, which has braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze; and if there should ever be danger on the deep, let us, shoulder to shoulder, march at the lead of Captain Rawlings—Benson, I should say—against

the common enemy, with this one word upon our banners, "The liberty of the Press, and the British Constitution for ever!" Hoorah for the red, white, and blue!'

With apologies for the nervous excitement into which the danger had thrown him, the doctor retired, by zig-zag, for the night, amid three tremendous cheers.

'His jaw-tackle isn't injured,' said Rawlings, 'and he can take his tumbler, I see, as neat as ever. Well, never mind; he's got us out of a pretty hole, and he bears no malice—though we did not do quite the right thing by him—I like him for that. Come, Davis, you take another to wind up; then we can turn in.'

The doctor's plan answered perfectly. An armed Chinese escort brought us the next morning safe to Cocoroco, the natives flying at our approach. We burnt the town, captured the envious doctor, and sold him to the Chinese; carried off many dozen pigs, and all the eleven barrels of Patagonians, which, an hour later, were beaten into pound slabs of opium to pay for our passage.

We reached Singapore safely. A day or two after, the doctor—having prepared several casks of pills with incredible diligence, considering the difficulty of procuring Tierra del Fuego herbs, and the North Polar mineral—started for Central Asia, *vid* Afghanistan, intending to establish an agency in Samarcand, and to paste his posters—in several languages—on the very wall of China itself. He is expected in Moscow early next December.

LARRY'S APPRENTICESHIP

An Irish Fairy Legend

BY MRS. G. LINNEUS BANKS, AUTHOR OF 'GOD'S PROVIDENCE HOUSE,' ETC.

CHAPTER I.

'Ah, sure, an' did I ever tell ye how the M'Canns came to be carpenters?'

This query was put by Margaret M'Cann (an old, valuable, faithful, and warm-hearted Irish servant of my mother's) to myself and youngest brother, who were seated—myself on the kitchen fender, and he on a low stool—listening to her *true* stories of Banshees and Leprechauns, in both of which she was a stout believer.

She had just told us of the wailing banshee she had herself seen and heard on the river bank, and of a leprechaun in his red cap and miniature suit of green; and she had borne with perfect good-humour our ridicule and banter over her credulity, when she put the sudden question, 'Did ye know, then, how the M'Canns came to be carpenters?'

'I never knew they were carpenters,' said I, with a light laugh.

'Why, Margaret, I thought all your family were farmers,' cried Fred, with an assumption of prior information.

'Them's the Quins, Master Fred. They are all farmers to this blessed day; an' the M'Canns were farmers too, an' had a fine holding amongst the Wicklow mountains, just a thrifle beyant Enniskerry, till Larry M'Cann (my grandfather that was) met with an adventure amongst the Good People.'

Here Margaret, being a devout Catholic, crossed herself.

'Good People! O, I suppose you mean fairies,' was my amendment.

'Sure, miss, an' I do; but we

never speak of them but as the Good People. It's onlucky.'

'O, that's only in Ireland,' suggested Fred, with a droll wink at me. 'In England, you may call them anything you like, and they won't mind it one bit.'

'Are ye sure now, Master Fred?'

'Certain. But, Margaret, what had the fairies to do with Larry M'Cann's carpentering?'

'Well, I'll tell ye, of coorse as it wor towld to me, when I was a slip of a colleen no bigger than yez.'

And Margaret settled herself on her chair with all the importance of an old story-teller.

'Ye must know that Larry was as fine an' strappin' a lad as ever stepped over the daisies. It was he that could handle a flail or a plough, or dig the praties, or stack the hay in the haggard. And when he went to chapel on a Sunday in his best frieze coat, with the ends of his bright handkercher flying loose, an' his caubeen cocked rakishly on one side, sure an' weren't all the girls in Enniskerry in love with his blue eyes an' yellow hair, and weren't half of them dying to have him for a bachelor?'

I presume we listeners looked mystified with the word 'bachelor' so applied, for Margaret explained, 'That's what you call a sweetheart, miss.'

'But Larry, though not consaited, laughed with one girl, an' joked with another; an' whenever he went to Dublin, or Phœnix Park, or the Strawberry-beds, could take the flure with the best, and have the purtiest



girl for a partner—an' troth it's he that could dance a jig—but he never thought of takin' a partner for life, or of offerin' himself as a bachelor, till he met with Kitty Quin, an' her black eyes made a hole in his heart at wanst. He was nigh six-an'-twenty when he met her. It was at a pattern at the Seven Churches of Glendalough, an' sorra a bit could he mind his prayers for looking at her as she towld her beads so piously, without seemin' to think of the bachelors or her own pretty face at all.

' Well, I heard grandfather say that, though he was as bowld and impudent in his way with the lasses as any lad in Enniskerry, his knees fairly knocked together, an' his heart went all in a flutter before he could bless himself, when Michael Quin tuk her by the hand, an' comin' towards him, said, "Larry, here's our Kitty come back from aunt Riley's;" an' when Larry wor too dazed to speak, went on, "Have yez got a ddrop in yer eye, man, that yez cannot see the colleen, or has Dublin made her so strange ye don't know her agin?"

' What Larry said he never remembered, but he felt as if he hadn't a bit of heart left, an' his words tumbled over each other like stones rolled downhill. He knew he had blundered out somethin', for Kitty's cheeks went red as the roses on her gown. She put out her soft little hand with a smile that showed two rows of teeth as white an' fresh as hailstones; an' she said modestly as a nun, "I'm glad to see any of my owld friends again, Mister M'Cann."

' He had sense enough left to take howld of the hand she offered; an' sure he must have given it a hearty grip, for the roses grew on her forehead to match her cheeks, an' she drew it back hastily.

' Larry, however, kept close to the brother an' sister; an' when the prayers were over, an' the people

began to enjoy themselves, an' the dudeens an' the whisky went round to warm the hearts an' the toes, then Larry plucked up his courage an' asked Kitty to tak' the flure with him. Now Kitty was either shy, or her Dublin manners made her too proud to dance at a pattern, so she made excuses. Michael, who had kissed the whisky-jar very lovingly, would not have his friend said "no" to; and so, to *keep Mike in a good humour*, she consinted to dance a jig with Larry.

' Sure, an' it was then he must have won her heart; for they all went back to Enniskerry together, an' she let Larry put his arm round her waist, jist to *howld her on the car*, bekase of the bad roads, an' stale a kiss when he lifted her down at Farmer Quin's garden gate. An' from that out Larry followed Kitty like ber shadder.

' But Peter Quin farmed more than two hundred acres, an' Larry's father only held a hundred an' twenty, an' that's a good differ, Master Fred. Then Mike an' Kitty wor all the childer Peter had, whilst Larry's brothers—God be praised!—were as thick on the flure as rabbits in a run: wheriver ye turned, yez might tumble over a pig or a gossoon.

' Troth, an' it wasn't long afore the neighbours began to look on Larry as Kitty's bachelor, an' one deceiptful ould fellow, who had himself an eye to Kitty's bit of money, gave Peter a hint that Larry was coortin' the lass for the love of her fortin'; tho' sorra a bit had Larry M'Cann so dirty a thought as that same.

' Peter had a temper that was always on the simmer, an' it biled over at wanst. By some ill luck Larry showed his face at the Quins' door before it had time to cool, so Peter thrated him to a thrife of his tongue, the mane blackguard.

" Div ye think Kitty, the illigant darlint, is for such a poor spalpeen

as yez?" he shouted. "She that's been eddicated in Dublin, an' hez book-larnin', let alone manners, an' a fortin' to the fore! But it's the fortin', I'm tbinkin', yez lookin' for wid one eye, an' the girl wid the other, Misther Lawrence M'Cann," he said, with a sneer an' a turn up of his ugly nose.

"It's well for yez, Mr. Pether Quin, that yez Kitty's father, or, by japers, an' it's showin' ye the taste of this blackthorn I'd be," said Larry on the instant, kaping his passion down with an effort. "Ye may kape your dirty money, bad cess to them as put the black thought of me into yer heart, if ye'll only put Kitty's sweet little hand into mine wid a blessin'."

"You may be sure, miss, as they did not whisper; an' hearin' a row, Mike ran from the barn into the slip of garden forenenent the house to join in the fun. He was jist in time to hear his father reape his insult, an' accuse Larry of wanting Kitty's hunderd pounds; an' then Mike fired up, an' took his friend's part like a Trojan."

"And what's a Trojan, Margaret?" asked Fred demurely, with another sly blink at me.

"Whisht, Masther Fred, an' don't be afther interruptin', or we'll never get to the Good People at all," said Margaret, ignoring the question.

Thus admonished, Master Fred allowed the story to proceed.

"But Mike could not bring his father to reason, even though he offered him a ddraw of his pipe. More by token, he himself was unwilling to let his sister marry a man who had neither house nor furniture of his own.

"It's not for the likes of her to lay her head undher a father-in-law's roof, an have her childer runnin' over a flure that is not her own," said Mike. "I'd say nothin' agin the match, Larry, if ye had but a farm or a house of yer own, or even the bits of things to make a house daacent for the lass."

'Larry went away with a very sore heart, miss, you may be sure, for he'd set his very sowl upon Kitty Quin.

'An' sure an' that was the black morning for Larry! Turnin' a corner of a quickset hedge on his way home, who should he come across but Kitty, with a basket of ripe strawberries on her arm, an' she lookin' more temptin' than the fruit.

'Kitty had a tender drop in her heart, and seeing that he was sad, she set herself to discover what it was about; and didn't she regret her curiosity in another minit?—for he poured out all his love an' his sorrow like a great gushin' stream, and held her hand as if he was drownin', an' only that could keep him from sinkin' quite.

'Taken by surprise, Kitty dropped her basket, an' would have fainted outright, had not Larry put out his arm an' caught her, and that brought her to her siven senses.

'Poor Larry *mistook* her faintness for a sign of her affection, an' in his joy kissed her sweet lips over an' over again. But Kitty soon told him the differ.

'She said she had only fainted from the heat. She was sorry he had mistaken her frindship for a warmer feeling; but though she was ashamed her father should have suspected him of a mercenary motive, she could not encourage his hopes. She should never marry without her father's consint; an' besides, her bringing-up had made her unfit for a farmer's wife, an' so she had determined—yes, determined was the word—never to marry any man who had not a good trade in his hands that would be a livin' either in country or town.

'Every word that Kitty said fell like ice on Larry's hot heart, an' he reeled home as if he had had lashins of whisky; an' when he got there, he took the whisky to drown his sorrow till he wor drunk in arnest.

'There was nobody to tell him of the battle in Kitty's breast between

love and pride, nor how she had crept into the house by the back way, an' shut herself up, all alone, in her room, to shed tears like a February cloud over the very mischief she had done, and the pain in her own breast.

' Sure, all the fun an' the frolic in Larry's nature were murthered that black mornin'. He went about the farm without a smile on his lip or a sunbeam in his eye, an' his mother would have it the boy was bewitched.

' Even Father Maguire noticed his altered looks, an' his careless dress when he went to mass on the Sundays, and the good priest did his best to set matters straight, but all to no use, miss.

' Peter Quin was sorry when his temper was off, but—small blame to him!—he still thought she might do better than go to the M'Canns' to be undher a mother-in-law, an' work like a slave for all Larry's younger brothers.

' As for Kitty, before the feel of Larry's kiss had gone from her lips the colleen was angry that he had taken her at her word; but she fed her courage with pride, and put a calm face on, though her heart was all in a tempest of throuble. An' sure, miss, there's many and many a girl does that, although you are too young to know it, and I hope never will.'

Here Margaret looked at me soberly, as if giving a leaf out of the book of her own experience.

' One fine June morning, when the roses were in full dhress, an' the air had the smell of flowers an' new-mown hay, Larry went to St. Patrick's Market to sell a cow that had gone dhry.

' Three weeks before, an' that same Larry would have sung or whistled every foot of the road, barrin' he met a traveller and stopped to give him the time o' day, or exchange a joke. But now he kept his hands in his pockets, his chin hung on his chest, an' his mouth

was as close as a miser's purse. He had a sup of whisky before be left home, to keep his heart up, but fur all that he looked as melancholy as the cow he wor drivin'.

' He had barely got a couple of miles beyant Peter Quin's farm, which lay in his way to Dublin, when he heard a thin weak voice callin' to him, like the wind through a keyhole,

"The top o' the mornin' to you, Larry!"

"The same to you, mister," answered Larry, slowly lifting his eyes, an' then rubbin' them to clear the cobwebs away; for straight across the road was a gate where never a gate had been before, an' sittin' cross-legged on the topmost bar was the queerest little old man Larry had ever seen.

' He was no bigger than a two-year child, but his face was as wizen an' wrinkled as if he was four hunderd. He was dressed in an old-fashioned coat an' breeches as green as the grass, had shining buckles in his shoes, and on his head a bright red cap. By all them tokens Larry knew that the little old man was a leprechaun, an' his mouth began to wather for some of the goold he knew the old gentleman must have hid in the ground somewhere about, an' his heart began to thump. But Larry was not the boy to be afraid, so he put a bould face on when the leprechaun, with his head cocked on one side and a knowing twinkle in his eye, said to him,

"That's a fine baste yez drivin', Larry!"

"Troth, yer honour, an' ye may say that same," replied Larry, doffin' his caubeen an' scrapin' his foot, for he thought it best to be civil.

"An' so your dhrivin' the cow to market bekase she's lost her milk; an' ye mane to ax siven pound tin for her!" said the leprechaun with a comical chuckle.

"Bedad, an' I am!" exclaimed Larry, opening his eyes and slapping his thigh in amazement, "an' sure, it's the knowin' old gentleman yer honour is!"

"Thru for you," said the leprechaun; "an' maybe I know, besides, that Larry M'Cann's goin' to the bad for love of the purtiest girl in Wicklow! But pluck up a sperrit, Larry, don't be cast down. It's I that owe Pether Quin a grudge this many a long day, for his maneness in chatin' the fairies of their due. Niver a fairies' dhrop' (milk left as a propitiatory offering to the Good People) 'is to be found in Pether's cow-house or dairy; and niver a turf or a pratie or a cast-off coat has he for a poor shivering beggar or omadhaun' (idiot), 'bad cess to him! An' so, Larry, I mane to befriend yez, for it's yez that have the warm heart and the open hand, an' we'll back thim against the cowld heart and the tight fist any day!" an' the leprechaun plucked off his red cap and swung it over his head, as if in high glee.

Larry, with another scrape of his foot, thanked the green-coated old gentleman, an' asked him if he meant to show him where to find a pot of goold.

"Ay, an' that I do; but, Larry," an' here he looked slyer than ever, "the fortin's in your own right hand, man, an' it's I that mane to tache ye to find it there."

Larry opened his great brown hand, an' turned it over, an' looked in the broad palm.

"Divil a bit I see of a fortin' there," says he.

"Whisht!" says the leprechaun. "Go on wid yer baste, an' when ye meet a man wid his breeches knees untied, an' his coat-tails down to his heels, an' a wisp ov straw in his shoes to kape his toes warm where they peep out ov his stockin's, an' a caubeen widout a brim, thin ye'll know the man that'll bid for yer

cow, an' give ye nine goolden guineas for her, not dirty notes."

"Nine guineas! bedad, an' that's more than—" Larry stopped short.

The leprechaun was gone, an' the gate was gone, an' the poor cow walked on as if she had never been stayed.'

'Perhaps she never had,' suggested Fred.

'Now, Masther Fred,' said Margaret, 'if ye interrupt me agin wid yer roguish doubts, I shall stop, an' ye'll never hear how it all ended.'

'Go on, Margaret,' urged I, and Margaret obeyed.

CHAPTER II.

LARRY's surprise an' the leprechaun's promises drove the thoughts of Kitty out of his head, an' he stepped toward Dublin with something of his ould lightsomeness; when just as he crossed the canal bridge he saw Kitty Quin standin' on her aunt Riley's doorstep in Clanbrassil-street, dressed as illigantly as a lady, an' lookin' as grand an' as proud as a queen.

Well, Kitty's face went crimson, an' Larry's heart gave a great leap; but she just made him a stiff kind of curtsey, an' the door bein' opened, went in without a word.

"Thim's Dublin manners, I suppose," thought Larry, as he went on, with his heart aching worse than ever; while Kitty, watchin' him from behind the window-blind as far as she could see, felt the tears rowl over her burnin' cheeks, an' then wiped them off angrily, as if ashamed of her natural feelin's, an' blamed herself for being silly.

Larry hardly knew how he got to the market, but sure enough there he met that same identical man the leprechaun had towld him of. An' more, by token, he made Larry a bid for the cow. He bid eight pound ten, but Larry, heartened beforehand, stuck out for nine guineas; and sure

he took Larry into a public-house that stood convenient, and took out of his breeches-pocket an owld rag tied round wid string to sarve as a purse, and there an' thin counted down the nine goolden guineas. Then he asked Larry to have a "ddrop an' a ddraw" to seal the bargain.

'Larry's customer called for the whisky, an' offered Larry his own pipe. So the boy had both the ddrop an' the ddraw, an' then they had another ddrop an' a draw; an' Larry remembered no more till he found himself lyin' on the grass, wid the stars shining out in honour of Midsummer-eve, an' a rushin' in his ears as of a great sea.

'Then he heard a rustle as of leaves, an' a mighty whisperin', an' lifted himself on his elbow to look about him, an' there he saw hunderds of little people no more than a span high, dressed in all sorts of queer outlandish fashions. But all the little men had coats of green velvet, and leaves of green shamrock in their hats; whilst the ladies had scarves of green gauze as fine as cobwebs, an' shamrock was wreathed round their hair, which shone like goold in the moonlight.

'They were all in commotion, running bither an' thither, howlding long discourses, an' appeared to be in some sort of throuble or difficulty.

'Presently he saw in their midst the loveliest little creature the light of his eyes ever flashed on. She was sitting in a silver-lily of a car, an' drawn by seven-and-twenty grasshoppers, three abreast. She had a wand in her hand, on which a crystal dewdrop twinkled like a star, an' Larry knew at wanst they were all fairies, an' she was their queen.

'Then, miss, as they drew nigher to him, Larry heard that one of the owld fairies lay dead, an' that they wanted a coffin for the berryin'. But sorra a coffin could they get, for fairy coffins must be made by mor-

tals, or the dead fairies never lie at rest. An' that was what the council an' the confusion wor about.

'Soon Larry heard the fairy queen say in a voice for all the world like the chirp of a cricket, "But who shall make the elf's coffin?"

'All of a sudden at least fifty of the Good People laid howld of him, an' cried out like so many bees hummin', "Here's Larry M'Cann, here's Larry M'Cann! it's he will make the coffin."

"But he never handled a saw or a plane in his life; he cannot make a pig-trough, an' how will he finish a coffin fit for an elf?" said one of the good people.

"Sure, thin, an' it's we that must tache him," answered another.

'With that the fairy queen touched him on the forehead, as lightly as if a leaf had dropped there, with her shining wand, an' it flashed before his eyes till they seemed to strike fire; an' before he could cry out, or ask a saint to purtect him, he felt himself goin' down, down, down, down into the very earth itself; an' it's lost he thought he was for evermore.

'Troth, an' Dublin Castle's but a mud cabin in comparishun with the palace Larry was in when he came to his senses. The walls were brighter than sunshine or rainbows, an' goold, an' silver, an' prechus jewels were as plentiful as praties. There were gardens with trees an' flowers, the likes of which were never in all Ireland, an' the birds were all crimson an' green an' laylock, an' sang sweetter than thrush or nightingale. He seemed to see all this at once, an' many a curious thing beside, which I disremember, and amongst it all the good people were as busy as bees in a hive.

'Almost the first thing he saw was the dead fairy lying on a bed of Indian moss, under a delicate silken quilt, with a tiny wreath of lilies of the valley on his head, and forget-

me-nots all about him. There was a fine bird of paradise singing over him so soft an' sweet, it charmed the very sowl of Larry. There were fairies watchin' the corpse, but sorra wan of them was sobbin' or cryin', an' sure that same bothered him.

'It was not long he was left to stare about him. One of the good people put an inch rule into his hand, an' set him to measure the corpse, an' sure that same came as natural to him as hoeing the cabbages. Then he was taken to a fine fairy workshop, where everything was as nate an' orderly as if it had just been claned. There was piles of wood of all sorts, an' one owld brownie towld Larry their names; and there was lots of bright tools, an' another wee owld fellow towld him their names; an' then two or three showed him how to use them. Then they gave him the wood an' the tools, an' he made an illigant little coffin as aisily as if he had been at the thrade all his life.

'The dead corpse was lifted in by the moorners as never moorned, an' Larry fastened down the lid as cliverly as any undhertaker in Leinster.

'As the funeral percession, wid the coffin in the midst, moved away to the fairies' cemetery, the owld brownie who first took notice of Larry said, "Very nately put thegither, Larry M'Cann; sure an' ye're a credit to your taichers. Take your wages, man, an' go." Larry put out his hand an' stooped for the glitterin' purse that wor held out to him, an'—whisht!

'He was lyin' on his back, with his curly head on a hard stone, undher a big tree, wid the morning sun shinin' full in his face, Powerscourt falls tumbling in foam down the great high rocks, that frowned above him, leapin' over big bowlders, an' rushin' away wid a roar undher a little wooden bridge just beyant.

'Larry rubbed his eyes, sat up,

an' rubbed them again, an' sure the more he looked about him, the more he was bothered.

"Be gorra, an' this is a quare thrick to be sarvin' a man," says he, as he scrambled to his feet, wid his bones as stiff an' sore as if he had been beaten with a shillaly. "Is it meself I am, or somebody else? an' whare have I bin? an', by the powers, how did I come here at all, at all? Is it dhrunk, or dhraming, or aslape I am this blessed minnit? Be jabers, the Good People—"

'Larry stopped, an' crossed himself, an' bethought him of his wages, an' all that was in his grip was dead leaves.

'But he gave a great jump, an' cried out, "*Plane* laves, bedad; an' it wur fairy goold, an' that iver turns to laves! An' it's a *plane* tree I'm lyin' undher! Musha, but that's a rare joke!"

'In another minute his heart sank, an' he thrimbled with fear lest he had been paid for the cow in fairy goold too, an' should find only yellow leaves in his pocket. But, faith, the nine bright goolden guineas—not dirty one-pound notes—were solid an' safe.

'The sun was dancin' brightly on the waters as Larry hastened along the narrow footpath by the stream, an' turnin' sharp off before he reached the foaming waters of the Dargle, mounted the crooked an' dangerous way up the steep banks to the high road, wondering why the good people couldn't have laid him down under a roadside hedge, or in a green field, instead of carrying him out of his way intirely to Powerscourt falls. It was all a mystery an' a dhrame to him, an' as he went along he kept repeating, "A fortin' in my hands, the owld leprechaun said he'd be asther showin' me. Sure, an' mighn't it be somethin' moore thin the *plane* leaves he meant? Ah, Kitty me darlint, if I'm sivin' days owlder since ye saw me last, I've sarved an'

apprenticeship that's made me moore than sivin' years wiser."

'From the day he saw Kitty at the pattern, Larry M'Cann had taken to savin' his money. It was kept in a crock hid under the thatch of the barn, an' there he went quietly before he put a foot on the kitchen floor. Takin' seven one-pound notes an' ten shillins out, he put the nine guineas in, an' took to his father the price he had fixed on the cow.

"Where have ye been, ye vagabone, all this blessed night?" cried old M'Cann, as the broth of a boy put his bright curly head in at the door.

"All night, father, all night, did ye say?" cried Larry, bewildered; for ye see, Master Fred, he thought he had been a week with the good people.

"Yes! all night; for isn't the sun shinin' an' this the blessed Midsummer-day, ye spalpeen? Is it dhruck ye are before the dew is off the daisies? Ab, Larry, Larry me lad, it's the wrong way yez goin' ever since Kitty Quin showed ye the cowld shouldher; bad cess to the whole lot of them! But where's the price of the baste? If ye were dhrunk, sure ye'd sinse left to take care of that."

'Ay, an' sure when he found he had not been more than a night with the fairies, he had sense enough left to keep his own secret. His mother said a mighty change had come over Larry, but sorra a guess had she where it came from.

'He put the potheen aside when it came his way, an' took to the farm so kindly, he went about his work whistling, and did as much in one day as he had ever done in two. Then he went an arrand to Dublin with the car, an' brought back a lot of carpenter's tools, an' some dale boards. He put them in an old shed that was tumblin' down, unknownst to any one but his brother Pat. Then he put a door on the pigsty, to kape the pigs out of the house, an' persuaded his father to have the

holes in the mud floor of the kitchen filled up; an' contrived somehow to make the farm decent and comfortable, with odd bits of improvement here an' there.

'Amongst it all, he an' Pat got the crooked walls of the shed to stand upright, an' mended the thatch, an' put the door again on its two hinges, an' put a lock on the door, widout a word to father or mother. An' then, sure, he contrived to put up some sort of a carpenter's bench, after the pattern in the fairies' workshop. More wood was got, an' troth, one mornin', to her surprise, Mrs. M'Cann found a new dale table, an' a dresser, an' an aisy-chair in her kitchen, the like of which wasn't in all Eaniskerry.

"Sure an' it's illigant, it's fairy work!" said all the neighbours.

"Thru for you, it is the fairies' work," said Larry, with a sly wink at Pat; an' Pat, knowin' what he had seen, an' nothing of the fairies, burst into a loud laugh, an' let out that Larry was the workman.

'No neighbour was more astonished than Larry's own father an' mother. They knew nothing of Larry's friend the leprechaun, nor his fairy teachers; they said the blessed St. Joseph must have put the knowledge in his head, an' called the boy a rale born genius.

'Other farmers' wives envied Mrs. M'Cann her fine dresser, on which a set of new wooden platters an' bickers were ranged, with here and there a bright-coloured crock fer show; an' they came beggin' of Larry to make the copy of it for them. So, sure, an' it came about that soon Larry had so much of his new work he was forced to tache two of his brothers the trade, an' build a proper workshop; and Farmer M'Cann had to set the gossoons to work on the farm instead of lounging about an' propping up door-posts all the day.

'But never a bit did Larry go

near Kitty all this time, though many a longin' look did he cast that way when he passed Peter Quin's gate. If they met at mass, he just gave her the time o' day, as any other friend might do; but though his very heart was bursting with love, he kept it, like his other saicrets, to himself.

'As for Kitty, there were plenty of bachelors after her, either for herself or her fortin'; but she never got the feel of Larry's kisses off her lips, an' cared more for a glance of his blue eye than for all the bachelors in Wicklow.

'She knew she had sent him away with her proud words, but she would have given all her goold for a whisper of love from him now he had taken her at her word, and seemed to forget her intirely. She just went paler an' thinner, an' when the next mid-summer roses were red on the bushes, there were only white ones on Kitty's cheeks.

'Mike and Larry had been fast friends all the time, an' many a job of work Larry did for him on his own account, but sorra a nail would he dhrive for Peter Quin. It was Mike who let Larry into the saicret that owld Corcoran the agent was after Kitty, an' that she had sent him about his business with a sharp word agen his desait in slandering a better man—maning Larry.

'A smart young shopkaiper from Dublin had made her an offer besides, an' even set Molly Mulroony the Blackfoot to thry an' pursuade her.'

'What's a Blackfoot, Margaret?' we asked in a breath.

'Sure, an' a Blackfoot's a match-maker, a woman as goes between shy lovers an' helps the coortin'.

'Well then, as Larry never went to the whisky-shop, nor to Peter Quin's, Mike found his way to the busy carpenter's shop. He used to ask a power of questions about the work in hand; for I must tell ye, Larry had been so well taught by

the Good People, he could turn his hand to cabinet work as well as rough carpentry.

'About this time, Mike saw Larry an' Pat workin' early an' late over furniture not meant for the farmers or gentry about; an' for a wondher, Larry never said a word who they were workin' for. But Pat, the sly rogue, let out as a great saicret that it was fur Larry's own house, agin his weddin'.

"Whare is the house?" says Mike.

"At Bray," says Pat.

"An' who's the sweetheart?" says Mike again.

"Arrah, now, an' that's jist what meself don't know," says Pat in reply.

'Mike went with his news straight to Kitty, who, with bare arms an' tucked-up gown, was makin' butter in the dairy, though she did despise a farmer's life.

'Down went butter an' butter-mould, an' Kitty into the bargain, an' Mike had much ado to bring her out of her faint.

"Kitty," says Mike, when they were all by themselves, "sure an' ye didn't care for Larry, did ye? I thought ye didn't, as ye trated him wid scorn an' contimpt, an' Larry tuk to the dhrink wid the heart-break."

"O, don't, Mike dear, don't! Throth, an' it *was* my own pride an' consait that druv Larry away, an' it's I that have had the heart-break ever since."

"Be me sowl, an' it must be a new sweetheart, an' a cliver lass, that set him agin drink an' made him turn carpenter! Och, Kitty, I'd sooner ye'd had Larry M'Cann than the biggest lord in the land;" an' Mike took out his pipe—his unfailling consoler—for a dhraw an' a think; an' Kitty having no such consolation, he left her sobbin'.

'The next day was Sunday, but Kitty was not at mass. Mike, however, was there, an' Peter, an' Larry

as fine as a Dublin tailor could make him.

"How's Miss Quin?" asked Larry purlitely of Mike as they walked home together.

"Throth, an' she might be better," answered Mike; an' says he, quite abrupt, "Whin's this weddin' of yours to come off, Larry?"

"It's not settled," says he; "I've not got the lady's consint yet."

"Not settled, an' her a lady, an' your house taken, an' your furniture made! Bedad, this passes me intirely!" An' Mike looked hard at Larry, an' Larry looked at Mike, an' whatever they saw, they shook hands, and Mike flung up his shillaly an' caught it again, an' danced every foot of the way to their own gate.

"Mebbe ye wouldn't mind comin' in for a bit, as Pether's stayed behint for confession," says Mike with a grin. An' in they went together.

'Dinner wor bein' laid in the kitchen, but Kitty was in the parlour.

"As ye're not very well, Kitty, I thought I'd betther bring a docthor to see yez," says Mike, openin' the door.

"A doctor!" says Kitty, starting to her feet, growing crimson an' then white as Larry stepped into the room, an' Mike discreetly shut the door upon them, an' being weak she might have fainted again, but Larry caught her in his arms—an' she got better.

Dinner waited for Peter, and Peter waited for Kitty; but Mike towld him that Kitty was ill an' the doctor was wid her, an' they couldn't be disturbed. But Peter wanted his

dinner, an' grew impatient; an' then Mike towld him that as he had been to confession, Kitty was at confession too, an' that Larry M'Cann was her confessor.

Sure, Peter was thunderstruck; but he had sinse to see that Larry M'Cann the thrivin' young carpenter was another sort of a man from the Larry M'Cann who worked on his father's farm with scarce a thought of payment; an' Mike soon got his father to give his consint with a blessing.

The praist followed the doctor in less than a month, but the praist this time was Father Maguire.

The day before the wedding, Larry took Kitty down to Powerscourt Falls, an' there sittin' with his arm round her slender waist, on the stone under the plane-tree where his head had lain, he towld her all about the leprechaun, an' his own apprenticeship to the fairies.

An' that was how the M'Canns became carpenters.'

Fred and I tried to convince Margaret, that the leprechaun was the result of her grandfather's morning dram, and that under the influence of farther potations he had strayed in safety from the road down the precipitous path to the Dargle, and so on to the Falls; and there sleeping, had dreamt of the fairy funeral.

But Margaret was not convinced; and a few years later the faithful creature died, as firm a believer in fairies as when she told us the story of Larry's apprenticeship, and the fortune he found in his own right hand.



TOLD BY A COMPRADOR

I SIMPLY tell it to you just as my old comprador told it to me,—no comment of mine could explain it, therefore I offer none,—but I can no more give you the story in the peculiar ‘Pidgin English’ he spoke (and which is so well understood by residents in the Celestial Empire), than I can give you the expression of calm credulity with which he told it to me. It was a magnificent night, and his grave monotonous voice made for me a soothing accompaniment to the whizzing of the thousands of insects which hovered about us. Carefully arranging his opium pipe, and looking dreamily along the glistening waters, he began:

The time and place suggest to me an extraordinary adventure, which happened to me about forty years ago. It was at the time when the ‘Fanqui’ (the name universally applied to foreigners in China) at Canton were offering enormous prices for silk; and I fancied I could see before me a prospect of making handsome profits, by personally purchasing the material on the borders of the province Szechuen, and bringing it back to Canton earlier than any others who might have been struck with the same idea. I provided myself with a Fanqui map, and pored over it long and anxiously; being rewarded at last by finding that I could take a creek to the west some hundreds of ‘li’ on my direct way, and so cut off at least one-third of my journey, and gain a valuable advantage over other travellers. I journeyed on, day after day, by the creeks; and at last reached the spot where I must turn westward for the new route. The junction of the creeks was at a village,

and I lingered there for hours, seeking from the natives information about the way I intended to take. But, to my great astonishment, they only stared blankly at me as I questioned them; and showed, not only utter ignorance of the course of the western creek, but a certain dread of even mentioning it, which, nevertheless, no one explained, or even seemed to understand.

But as I felt a thorough confidence in the correctness of my map, and as so much depended on dispatch, I did not hesitate to proceed along the unknown creek. As I rowed on, I could not help remarking the desolate appearance of the flat bare country through which I passed. No birds sang, as they had sung to me through all the past days of the journey; and (which was more startling still, in a country where one never misses them) no insects fluttered about me, with their ceaseless and often intolerable noise. One early dawn, in this heavy and oppressive stillness—a stillness which was not rest but utter stagnation—I saw a great and beautiful city lying before me in the mists. Still none of the sounds of a great city met me as I approached it; over it, as over the whole country, lay that silence which was oppression; and the air seemed to come from a hot furnace. A crowd of war-junks, sanpans, and tankas covered the water; but I could see no sign of life within them, as I rowed up to the chain barrier which crossed the river. It was closed and locked. No sentinel challenged me, and after waiting in vain for an answer to my summons, I tried to force it. No guards or customs-officers came forward to question me,

and this, of course, was peculiarly strange in a country where imposts are levied with rapacity. Having with great labour broken the padlock from the mouldy post, I passed on, rowing among and between the empty rotting sanpans we had seen, and reached the water-gate, over which a heavy crimson-silk flag hung motionless upon its staff. Here again no human being met me, no one greeted or challenged me; and this barrier I found thoroughly impassable. Again and again I hailed the ramparts, meeting with no reply or sign of life. Louder and louder I hammered at the gates, without seeming to make myself heard, until at last a head was slowly raised above the wall. The face I met as I looked up had an odd expression upon it, which I could not understand. It was apparently the face of a man not more than twenty years of age, yet in every other sense it was an old and tired face; old with a weird agedness, tired with a total absence of hope or energy. I told my errand, requesting that the gate might be opened to me; but I received no word in reply, and the face disappeared behind the ramparts again. Some little time afterwards the massive gates were slowly opened to me by an old mandarin, who surveyed me in a sort of scared surprise, as I passed in and landed among a crowd of silent watchers. I was conducted at once to the guard-house, and there questioned slowly. But my answers were by no means fluent or easy, for I felt strangely awed by all I saw: the still grave forms around me; the expression of scared incredulity on every face, young and old alike; the dismal silent reception I had met with; the heavy oppressive stagnation of the air; and the indefinable unfamiliarity which struck me in all things. As I slowly answered the questions put to me, the old mandarin, who was my chief interro-

gator, grew more and more excited —or, I might rather say, less and less apathetic—and others, one by one, joined him in his questioning; until the faces, on all of which rested that weird look of age without its symbols, crowded together around me; drawing nearer and nearer to mine in ghastful eagerness, as I answered them that the emperor was well, and holding his court then in Pekin.

'Did they know so little of the proceedings of our emperor, Taon-Kwang, and of his capital Pekin?' I asked, wondering.

There ran an exclamation through the crowd. 'Where was Pekin? Who was Taon-Kwang?'

'Our emperor, of course,' I said, 'and Pekin our capital.' And I looked round, feeling that a great city such as this—a royal city evidently—could not possibly be in ignorance of such national facts, and wondering how it could seem to be so.

'Where, then, was the Emperor —, and his capital of —?'

I began involuntarily to laugh as I recollect that that emperor's name belonged to a time about one thousand years before, and that that capital was never even heard of now. But the laugh died suddenly, for it sounded most strangely out of place amid this odd assembly, whose laughter seemed to have been hushed for ever by some great stillness that hung above them; and I answered as I had answered before. They only echoed those two words, 'Pekin and Taon-Kwang!' The incredulous exclamation grew to fear, then horror. The white faces turned whiter; the eager surprise upon them grew to a terrible enlightenment. The cluster of listening figures were silent and motionless now, as if a breath had struck them into stone, and there was no movement until the old mandarin who had first addressed me sat down and hid his face. Then they all followed his

example, one after another; and I was left standing in their midst, speechless with bewilderment. Impatient at last, I asked to be taken from the guard-house, and then the old man addressed me again, in a troubled, trembling voice.

'Stranger, is all that you have just told us *true*?' .

After I had assured him that undoubtedly it was so, he signed to the people with his hand; and they went out, and left us two alone in the guard-house.

'Before we lead you to the palace,' he said, 'I have a story to tell you of our city. Listen, stranger: I will make it short, for it is horrible for all of us.'

'While the great emperor, of whom we inquired of you, was holding his court in his winter palace at Yen-gan-foo, he met the Tartar maiden Song-fing, and, struck by her wondrous beauty, determined to make her his wife. The day for the imperial marriage was fixed upon, and all the grandees of the empire were summoned to court; among them, of course, our master, Tong-ko-lin-sing, viceroy of this province and the emperor's only son. He repaired at once to the capital, where was nothing but feasting and rejoicing. In the very first hour of his arrival, he saw a fair and beautiful maiden sitting alone under the magnolia trees in the palace garden. So lovely she was, as well as so solitary and so dejected, that his heart went out to meet her and to cheer her; and only a few minutes had they loitered together in the fragrant shade when he felt that he loved her, and that before his return to his own province he must win her for his bride.

'But, ah! this was the Tartar maiden Song-fing, who was betrothed to the emperor, and Tong-ko-lin-sing little guessed what he was doing until it was too late to stop; until he loved her so passionately that neither his fear nor his affection for

his father could stop him. They had many stolen interviews, in which their vows of love were repeated, and many secret meetings, in which their plans of escape were perfected; and when the day fixed for the royal wedding dawned, they two were missing from the court—they two, the most important of the assembled guests; the only two whom the poor old emperor loved.

'Travelling rapidly, Tong-ko-lin-sing brought his beautiful young bride at once to this his own city, and married her with almost as much state as his imperial father would have done. But no foreign guests collected here to celebrate the festival. The city gates were closed, and the ramparts manned. We knew how keen and fierce the emperor's wrath would be. We knew how he would hurl it over his son's dominions. We knew what restitution he would demand, and what vengeance he would pursue; and within the barriers we waited in dread expectation. The demand soon came from the emperor in threatening terms—the restitution of his bride and the surrender of his son's person, as well as the forfeiture of his territories.

'The city was in a state of rigorous defence; Tong-ko-lin-sing's army was loyal to a man; and so he at once hoisted the crimson flag of rebellion, sent back his defiance, and waited for the besieging army. Then came the emperor's anathema—the father's dreadful curse upon his only son, his son's wife, the viceregal city, and every subject within its walls; a curse sworn by the names we hold most sacred and most powerful.

'So, garrisoned and defiant, we awaited the royal armies; waited and watched until the watching grew painful and wearisome; but nothing broke it until your summons at our gates to-day. The flight of time has been unnoticed by us. No record of passing events has been taken. We have only been expecting the

attack of our wronged and angry emperor. The prince occupies himself in his inner palace, and seems to heed nothing but the thought that soon his wife and his dominions may be snatched from him, and he himself taken a prisoner to the capital. They are together always, as they have been since we opened the gates to them on that night which you say is nearly ten hundred years ago. There have been no births, no deaths, no marriages among us since; no joy, no sorrow. Everything has been still in silence and suspense; still with a heavy passionless stagnation. Every morning we have been prepared for a siege, and every night has found us waiting unchallenged at our posts; and never once until to-day has any one even attempted to enter our garrisoned city. Stranger, can it be that this fearful curse has been in operation almost a thousand years?"

I could not answer, for my mind was bewildered by this story; and I was bitterly regretting that I had ever ventured down that deserted creek. But when the old mandarin entreated me, in a low excited tone, to go with him to the prince, I roused myself and followed in his footsteps. In a gorgeous outer room of the palace he left me, walking on himself past the guards, who stood at their posts like statues, and through the groups of attendants, who moved listlessly about their duties. I had had time to remark everything about the room, when a dreadful cry from an inner apartment rent the stifling heavy air. To me, in spite of its tone of long-suppressed anguish, it was a relief; and I went on at once into the prince's presence, following the attendants and guards, who all rushed forward in a sudden panic.

I never can adequately describe the scene that was before me when I entered the gorgeous inner palace. Prince Tong-ko-lin-sing, a tall martial-looking man, in the prime of youth—yet with that same nameless

look of age upon his face, which I had noticed on all the other faces—was leaning over a table, intently studying a long paper closely covered with writing still uneffaced and bright, though the date under the imperial seal showed that it had been written more than nine hundred years. On a cushion at the prince's feet, half lay, half knelt, his beautiful young wife, looking up into his face in vague bewilderment. Her dress was just the dress of the present day; for our fashions, as you know, do not change even through hundreds of years. The loose sleeves of her tunic—sky-blue satin, embroidered richly with gold dragons—fell over her clasped hands, the swansdown which edged them not whiter than her trembling fingers, and the large jewels glistening in her hair not more restless than her eager frightened eyes.

The attendants had lost their listlessness now; the unmoved faces of the guards had assumed a sharp keen curiosity; and the old mandarin, standing at the prince's side, was eager enough as he pointed with a shaking hand to the date upon the emperor's letter. As I looked, I knew that the full horror of their situation had broken upon them all. They had discovered, with a dreadful shock, the number of years they had been living under this curse, while he who had uttered it had been dead. I had brought them the first tidings from the busy, living world without; I had excited new feelings and sensations among them, and opened their eyes to the mystery which had so long enshrouded them. Perhaps now the spell, which had hung for a thousand years upon the city, might be removed. I waited breathlessly to see.

The guards leaned forward on their weapons, listening eagerly for a word to break the silence. The attendants hovered about the prince in speechless excitement. The princess still knelt and looked with a

startled loving glance into her husband's face. The maidens who surrounded her drew closer together, a piteous inquiry in their gaze. The old mandarin, breathing heavily, still held his tremulous finger on the date upon the emperor's anathema. The prince bent over the writing, with his brows knit in deep bewilderment. I stood watching the whole terrible yet beautiful scene.

Swiftly, noiselessly, suddenly, the change came. The shields and weapons dropped from the walls, falling without a sound upon the marble floor. The figures, in their rich bright dresses, crumbled into dust as they stood or sat in their expectant, waiting attitudes. The palace fell around me softly, silently; fell and left me standing unhurt upon its old foundation.

Shading my eyes from the terrible sight of magnificent buildings falling about me without a crash, I hurried through the decaying streets, and entered my own boat again. As I did so, I saw the heavy crimson flag fall slowly from above the city gate. At the moment that it touched the walls the boats that lay upon the waters sank, and the barriers fell before us. The last remnant of the whole city melted in the vanishing

mist, and there lay nothing now on all the flat and barren country to tell that human beings had ever inhabited it; nothing of this ghastly mystery remained to show that such a city had ever existed.

Quickly I plied my sculls, breathing with freedom once again. And now no hot heavy mist enshrouded me. The sun shone clearly; the birds sang, and myriads of bright and busy insects fluttered about me as I rowed.

I have never been able to glean any particulars of this city, though I have made ceaseless inquiries. Its history seems to be forgotten—as is the history of so many of our antiquities. I have told you all I know of it, and all that I shall ever know.

You may guess that I never again travelled by that westward creek, though by doing so on that one journey I had realised such enormous profits by being first in the market with my silk, that certainly if anything could have tempted me to try that route again, I should have tried it.

This was the story, as my old comprador told it to me.

CHARLES W. HAY.
Nagasaki.

THE GRAVEDIGGER

BY REA

O, a thankless task is mine! Yet I
Many an aching heart lay by.
Never mortal voice can wake you,
Never mortal trouble shake you,
Never more the world deceive you,
Never more its coldness grieve you:

When I shall hush you to your rest,
The world may do its worst or best.

I lay your lost loye down to rest,
I heap the cold earth on her breast;
Colder far than the grave I ween
The cruel, cruel world has been;

I lay her where she cannot know
The summer's heat or winter's snow:
Let them do their worst or best,
I have hush'd her to her rest.

Ye poor, who never roof have known,
I make a dwelling all your own;
Ye weary ones, when toil is past;
Ye aged ones, ye come at last;
Ye little ones, who fading soon
Like spring's white buds ere sun of June:
When I shall hush you to your rest,
The world may do its worst or best.

HAUNTED

WHAT has been done in the olden time
 In this chamber dim and low ?
 Was it a deed of guilt or crime,
 A hid wrong or stealthy blow,
 That is acted again at midnight's chime
 With clangour of wail and woe ?

Ah ! who shall tell ? Not the pallid walls,
 Or the dusky lattice pane ;
 The bat that flits as the last stroke falls,
 Or the panel's crimson stain,
 Where the tapestry waves in phantom
 palls
 Alive with weird forms again.

But sure as ever the hour comes round
 A heaviness chills the air,
 The rustle of silk and a footstep's sound
 Are heard on the creaking stair ;
 While moving past, o'er the echoing
 ground,
 A presence unseen is there.

Slowly it climbs, with a hollow pace,
 You can count its progress sore,
 Till it stops and lists on the landing-
 place,
 Then tries at the fasten'd door.
 As within are shrieks and a struggle's
 Dull thuds on the oaken floor ! [trace,
 'Let me in !' it always pleads and moans,
 'Let me in !' the same cry goes ;
 But no answer comes, save the dying
 Of a soul in mortal throes. [groans
 Then it sobs, and glides away, while its
 Ring out on the dread repose. [tones

Sadly, wearily, downward it wends
 To the spot from whence it came ;
 Thank heaven, with daylight the gla-
 mour ends
 This horror without a name, [sends
 That all the warm life-blood quivering
 Like ice through the thrilling frame.

A STRING OF GHOST STORIES

BY JAMES GRANT, AUTHOR OF 'THE ROMANCE OF WAR,' ETC.

A BELIEF in the ghost of vulgar superstition is as much exploded in England now as are the opinions advanced by King James in his 'Demonologie.' Yet the learned Bacon admitted that such things might be. Luther, Pascal, Guy Patin, Milton, Dr. Johnson, and even Southey, believed in the existence of such mediums with the unseen world. 'My serious belief amounts to this,' wrote the latter: 'that preternatural impressions are sometimes communicated to us for wise purposes; and that departed spirits are sometimes permitted to manifest themselves.' And had Pope not entertained some similar idea, he had not written:

'Tis true, 'tis certain, man, though dead,
 retains
Part of himself; the immortal mind re-
 mains:
The *form* subsists without the *body's* aid,
Aerial semblance and an empty shade.'

Upon the truth or falsehood, the theories or rather hypotheses, of such alleged appearances, we mean not to dwell; but merely to relate a few little anecdotes connected with them, and drawn—save in Lord Brougham's instance—from sources remote and scarce.

In the memoirs of the celebrated Agrippa d'Aubigné, grandfather of Madame de Maintenon, the wife of Louis XIV., a man famous for his zeal in Calvinism and disbelief in the spiritual world, and one whose integrity was deemed alike rigid and inflexible, we read the following of a spectre like that of a nursery tale:

'I was,' he wrote, 'in my bed, and entirely awake, when I heard some

one enter my apartment; and perceived at my bedside a woman, remarkably pale, whose clothes rustled against my curtains as she passed. Withdrawing the latter, she stooped towards me, and giving me a kiss that was cold as ice, vanished in a moment!'

D'Aubigné started from bed, and was almost immediately after informed of the sudden death of his mother, to whom he was tenderly attached.

In a letter of Philip, second Earl of Chesterfield, we find a curious story of a double apparition occurring at the same moment, and which, though it somewhat illustrates Ennemosers' theory of polarity, is beyond the pale of modern philosophy.

In the gray daylight of an early morning in 1652, the Earl saw a figure in white, 'like a standing sheet,' appear within a yard of his bedside. He attempted to grasp it; but, eluding him, the figure slid towards the foot of the bed, and melted away. He felt a strange anxiety; but his thoughts immediately turned to the Countess (Lady Anne Percy), who was then at Networth with her father, the Earl of Northumberland, and thither he immediately repaired. On his arrival a footman met him on the staircase, with a packet directed to him from his lady; whom he found with her sister, the Countess of Essex, and a Mrs. Ramsay. He was asked why he had come so suddenly. He told his motive, his alarm and anxiety; and, on perusing the letter in the sealed packet, he found that the Countess had written to him requesting his return; 'as she

had seen a thing in white, with a black face, by her bedside.' These apparitions were identically the same in appearance, and were seen by the Earl and Countess *at the same moment*, though they were in two places forty miles apart. No catastrophe followed. The Earl, however, survived his lady, and lived till the year 1713.

In the *St. James's Chronicle* for 1762 we find a strange story of an apparition being the means of revealing a murder, and bringing the guilty parties to the fatal tree at Tyburn. The narrative was said to have been found among the legal papers of a counsellor of the Middle Temple, then recently deceased.

'In the year 1668 a young gentleman of the West Country, named Stobbine, came to London, and soon after, as ill luck would have it, he wedded a wife of Wapping, the youngest daughter of a Mrs. Alceald; and in the space of fifteen months the providence of God sent them a daughter, which (*sic*) was left under the care of the grandmother, the husband and his wife retiring to their house in the country.'

In 1676, when the daughter was six years old, Mrs. Alceald died, and the child was sent home, and remained there till 1679, when a Mrs. Myltstre, her maternal aunt, 'having greatly increased her means, forsook the canaille and low habitations of Wapping, came into a polite part of the town, took a house among people of quality, and set up for a woman of fashion,' and thither did she invite the Stobbinés and their daughter to spend the winter with her. Among her visitors were her husband's brother, who had the title or rank of captain, and who seems to have been a bully and gamester—a 'blood,' in a flowing wig and laced coat—and there was another relation, who practised as an apothecary.

All these five persons dined together on the birthday of the little

girl Stobbine, when a terrible catastrophe ensued. In a spirit of play, it was presumed, she took up a sword that was in the room, and pointing it at Mr. Stobbine, cried, 'Stick him, stick him!'

'What!' said he, 'would you stab your father?'

'You are not my father; but Captain Myltstre is.'

Her father, upon this, boxed her ears, and was instantly run through the body by the captain. 'Down he dropped,' we are told, and then his wife, her sister, the captain, and the apothecary, all trampled upon him till he was quite dead, and interring him secretly, gave out that he had returned to the West Country. Time passed on, and though inquiries were made, and messengers sent after the missing Stobbine, he was heard of no more for a time. His daughter was sent to a distant school, and her mother, 'who pretended to go distracted, was sent to a village a few miles out of town, where the captain had a pretty little box for his convenience.'

A memory of the terrible scene she had witnessed haunted the daughter, she had nightly horrible dreams and frights, to the terror of a young lady who slept with her; and she always alleged that a spectre haunted her, a spectre visible to her only, and on these occasions she would exclaim, with every manifestation of horror,

'There is a spirit in the room! It is Mr. Stobbine's spirit. O, how terrible it looks!'

These appearances and her paroxysms led to an inquiry before a justice of the peace; and without any warning given, the whole of the guilty parties were apprehended and committed to the Gate-house, tried at the Old Bailey, 'and condemned, to the entire satisfaction of the county, the court, and all present.'

After this, Stobbine's troubled spirit appeared no more. Mrs. Myltstre was hanged, and her body was

thrown into the gully-hole near her old house in Wapping; Mrs. Stobbine was strangled and burned. The captain and the apothecary were hanged at Tyburn, and the latter was anatomiſed; and so ended this tragedy.

Another remarkable detection of murder, through the alleged appearance of a ghost, occurred in 1724.

A farmer, returning homeward from Southam market in Warwickshire, disappeared by the way. Next day a man presented himself at the farmhouse, and asked of the wife if her husband had come back.

'No,' she replied; 'and I am under the utmost anxiety and terror.'

'Your terror,' said he, 'cannot surpass mine; for last night as I lay in bed, quite awake, the apparition of your poor husband appeared to me. He showed me several ghastly stabs in his body, which is now lying in a marl-pit.'

The pit was searched, the corpse was found, and the stabs, in number and position, answered in every way to the description given by the ghost-seer, to whom the spectre had named a certain man as the culprit; and this person was committed to prison and brought to trial at Warwick for the crime, before a jury and the Lord Chief-justice Sir Robert (afterwards Lord) Raymond, who was succeeded in 1733 by Sir Philip Yorke. The jury would speedily have brought in a verdict of guilty; but he checked them by saying,

'Gentlemen, you lay more stress on the allegations of this apparition than they will bear. I cannot give credit to these kind of stories. We are now in a court of law, and must determine according to it; and I know not of any law which will admit of the testimony of an apparition; nor yet if it did, doth the ghost appear to give evidence. Crier,' he added, 'call the ghost.'

The farmer's spirit being thrice summoned in vain, Sir Robert again addressed the jury on the hitherto

unblemished character of the man accused, and stoutly asserted a belief in his perfect innocence; adding, 'I do strongly suspect that the gentleman who saw the apparition was *himself* the murderer, and knew all about the stabs and the marl-pit without any supernatural assistance; hence I deem myself justified in committing him to close custody till further inquiries are made.'

The result of these was, that on searching his house sufficient proofs of his guilt were found; he confessed his crime, and was executed at the next assize.

In the list of the officers of the 33d regiment, when serving under Lord Cornwallis in America, and then called the 1st West York, will be found the names of Captain (afterwards Sir John Coape) Sherbrooke and Lieutenant George Wynward. The former had recently joined the 33d from the 4th, or King's Own Regiment. These young men, being similar in tastes and very attached friends, spent much of their time in each other's society, and when off duty were seldom apart. One evening Sherbrooke was in Wynward's quarters. The room in which they were seated had two doors, one that led into the common passage of the officers' barrack, the other into Wynward's bedroom, from which there was no other mode of egress.

Both officers were engaged in study, till Sherbrooke, on raising his eyes from a book, suddenly saw a young man about twenty years of age open the entrance door and advance into the room. The lad looked pale, ghastly, and thin, as if in the last stage of a mortal malady. Startled and alarmed, Captain Sherbrooke called Wynward's attention to their noiseless visitor; and the moment the lieutenant saw him he became ashy white and incapable of speech, and, ere he could recover, the figure passed them both and entered the bedroom.

'Good God—my poor brother!' exclaimed Wynward.

'Your brother!' repeated Sherbrooke in great perplexity. 'There must be some mistake in all this. Follow me.'

They entered the little bedroom—it was tenantless; and Sherbrooke's agitation was certainly not soothed by Wynward expressing his conviction that from the first he believed they had seen a spectre; and they mutually took a note of the day and hour at which this inexplicable affair occurred. Wynward at times tried to persuade himself that they might have been duped by the practical joke of some brother officer; yet his mind was evidently so harassed by it, that when he related what had occurred, all had the good taste to withhold comments, and to await with interest the then slow arrival of the English mails. When the latter came, there were missives for every officer in the regiment except Wynward, whose hopes began to rise; but there was *one* solitary letter for Sherbrooke, which he had no sooner read than he changed colour and left the mess table. Ere long he returned and said,

'Wynward's younger brother is actually no more!' The whole contents of his note were as follows: 'Dear John, break to your friend Wynward the death of his favourite brother.'

He had died at the very moment the apparition had appeared in that remote Canadian barrack. Strange though the story, the veracity of the witnesses was unimpeachable; and Archdeacon Wrangham alludes to it in his edition of Plutarch, who, like Pliny the younger, believed in spectres. Of Wynward, we only know that he was out of the regiment soon after his brother's death; and of Sherbrooke, that he lived to see the three days of Waterloo, became Colonel of the 33d, Commander of the Forces in North America, and died a General and G.C.B.

Prior to accompanying his regiment, the 92d Highlanders, in the Waterloo campaign, the famous Colonel John Cameron, of Fassifern, a grandson of the Lochiel of the 'Forty-five,' dined with Lieutenant-colonel Simon Macdonell, of Morar, who had formerly been in the corps when it was embodied at Aberdeen as the old 100th, or Gordon Highlanders. On the occasion of this farewell dinner there were present other officers of the regiment, some of whom died very recently, and it occurred in the house of Morar, at Arasaig, a wild part of Ardnamurchan, on the western coast of Inverness-shire.

As the guests were passing from the drawing-room towards the dining-room, old Colonel Macdonell courteously paused to usher in Cameron before him, and in doing so he was observed to stagger and become pale, while placing his hands before his face, as if to hide something that terrified him. Cameron saw nothing of this, though others did; and all were aware that subsequently, during dinner, their host seemed disconcerted and 'out of sorts.'

Those unbidden visions known as the *taisch*, or second-sight, were alleged to be hereditary in the family of Morar; and hence when Cameron fell at Quatre Bras a few weeks afterwards, the old Colonel asserted solemnly, that at the moment when Cameron passed before him he saw his figure suddenly become enveloped in a dark shroud, which had blood-gouts upon it about the region of the heart; but no shroud enveloped the gallant Cameron when his foster-brother buried him in the *allée verte* of Brussels, where his body lay for six months, till it was brought home to Kilmalie, and buried under a monument on which is an inscription penned by Scott.

One of the latest testimonies of the existence of a spiritual world is that given in the *Life and Times of Henry Lord Brougham*, written by himself.

In volume first, he tells us that after he left the High School of Edinburgh to attend the University, one of his most intimate friends there was a Mr. G—, with whom, in their solitary walks in the neighbourhood of the city, he frequently discussed and speculated on the immortality of the soul, the possibility of ghosts walking abroad, and of the dead appearing to the living; and they actually committed the folly of drawing up an agreement, written mutually *with their blood*, to the effect, 'that whichever died first should appear to the other, and thus solve any doubts entertained of the life after death.'

G— went to India, and after the lapse of a few years Brougham had almost forgotten his existence, when one day in winter—the 19th of December—as he was indulging in the half-sleepy luxury of a warm bath, he turned to the chair on which he had deposited his clothes, and thereon sat his old college-chum G—, looking him coolly, quietly, and sadly in the face. Lord Brougham

adds that he swooned, and found himself lying on the floor. He noted the circumstance, believing it to be all a dream, and yet, when remembering the compact, he could not discharge from his mind a dread that G— must have died, and that his appearance, even in a dream, was to be received as a proof of a future state. Sixty-three years afterwards the veteran statesman and lawyer appends the following note to this story of the apparition:

'Brougham, Oct. 16, 1862.—I have just been copying out from my journal the account of this strange dream, *certissima mortis imago*. Soon after my return there arrived a letter from India announcing G—'s death, and stating that he died on the 19th of December! Singular coincidence! Yet when one reflects on the vast number of dreams which night after night pass through our brains, the number of coincidences between the vision and the event are perhaps fewer and less remarkable than a fair calculation of chances would warrant us to expect.'

LOST AT SEA

THEY watch'd her sail with the favouring gale,
While the sun shone bright on the river;
But little they knew, as she faded from view,
She had sailed away for ever.

Many weary days shall eager eyes gaze,
And hope in long death-throes shall quiver;
But that look was their last, for, a thing of the past,
She has vanish'd, and vanish'd for ever.

A dark mystery, left with the lone sea,
No herald her fate shall deliver;
Men only shall know, mid the sun's setting glow,
They lost her, and lost her for ever.

J. R.

THE DEATH CRY

A Tale of the Banshee

BY E. J. CURTIS, AUTHOR OF 'THE FATAL TRYST'

I WAS in the act of asking that question, so important to myself, 'Are there any letters for the Rev. Hugh D'Alton?' at what I may call the 'Poste Restante' of the Charing-cross Hotel, and at the same time preparing myself to wait patiently while pigeon-hole D. was being looked through, when I heard behind me a voice I knew. That richest and most musical tone in the world—English cultivation upon an Irish *accent*; not an Irish *brogue*: when will our English friends learn the difference between the two?—was unmistakable; I should have known who the speaker was even if he had not descended upon me, of course clapped me on the back, and called out, 'Hugh, old fellow, what brings you here?'

'Hunger,' I said, 'and a desire for my letters.' A packet was presented to me as I spoke.

'Why do you let bores write to you when you're out for a lark? I wouldn't do it. Breakfast, did you say? All right, breakfast with me; I have such a jolly party here, and we're all going over to Ireland, to Randlestown, my boy, to-morrow morning. When do you go?'

'To-night.'

'Wait for us, you may as well, and it will be twice the fun; and remember you spend Christmas at the Manor; but, of course, my mother and Norah have you booked already. Come along; never mind your letters now. I must introduce you to my friends.'

I gave up my plans to his, and the second morning after our chance

meeting found us all together at a rather early breakfast in a private room of the Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin. My friend Henry, or, to call him by his more familiar name, Harry O'Neill, was the life of the party, and to good spirits Nature had enabled him to add the attractions of a handsome face and person. His unconquerable love of fun, and the quiet good breeding with which, becoming grave in a moment, he met and answered all complaints and smoothed all difficulties, quite won over two elderly dowagers, who were strongly inclined to resent having been obliged to get up in time for a nine-o'clock breakfast after their long journey on the previous day. These ladies had never been in Ireland before, and they fully expected to meet 'Rory of the Hills' upon the staircase about to make a raid upon the luggage, and to see a 'Head Centre,' with a pistol at full cock, looking in at every window.

Henry O'Neill, Esq., of Randles-town Manor, was a gentleman of good family and tolerably good fortune in the county Antrim, a descendant of the O'Neills of the Red Hand, and in appearance no unworthy scion of that princely house. He had been educated at Harrow, and by his own desire he went to Oxford, where, I believe, he was not distinguished for anything but muscular—I suppose it is wrong to say *unchristianity*. And yet I do not think he was more pagan in his ideas and conduct than were the majority of his contemporaries. His father died before he was of age, and left him



J. R. Proctor, del.

J. R. Batterhell, sc.

"THE BANSHEE, THE BANSHEE!" SHE MOANED

to the guardianship of his mother, the Lady Mary O'Neill; and he was now, at four-and-twenty, engaged to his cousin, Norah Fitzgerald, the daughter of his father's only sister. Norah was an orphan, and, for an Irish girl, an heiress—heiresses in the Emerald Isle are not so plentiful as blackberries.

From the time Norah came to Randlestown Lady Mary set her heart upon the match, and she watched with pleasure the little girl's growing affection for her handsome cousin. I cannot say that when he asked Norah to be his wife Harry did not make himself as happy as he made his mother; but circumstances, which I may perhaps be able to explain more fully by and by, convinced me that he was not in love with the beautiful and gentle girl who had given to him her whole heart. The engagement had now lasted some years, for Harry did not wish to marry until he was twenty-five, and when I met him so unexpectedly in London he still wanted a few months of that age. He had been abroad for some time, and he was then going back to Ireland with his gay party, to spend his last Christmas as a bachelor at Randlestown Manor.

I need not particularly describe all the members of the party; it consisted of some young men and women; and the two timid dowagers before mentioned. One of these ladies was a widow without incumbrance, an old friend of Lady Mary's, Mrs. Lestrange by name; the other, and to her I noticed young O'Neill was specially attentive, was a Mrs. Lomax, and she was incumbered by a handsome girl, her daughter Adelaide. I had never before seen so handsome a woman. I did not like her, even from the first moment of our introduction; but her claims to beauty could not be denied by her greatest enemy. She was dark-skinned and dark-haired, and she had dark-brown eyes with

long black lashes; eyes which were often luminous and languishing, sometimes mournfully pathetic, but never tender. I have heard women declare that she had no heart; but they were wrong. That useful organ was not wanting; but although it might be stirred by a wild storm of passion, love—gentle, tender, self-sacrificing love—I could not give it credit for either feeling or inspiring.

O'Neill told me that he had met Mrs. Lomax and her daughter at Baden. Mrs. Lomax remembered having known the young man's mother; Lady Mary was reminded of her old acquaintance by letter; the intimacy prospered, and resulted in a cordial invitation to mother and daughter to spend Christmas in Ireland.

Forming my opinion upon all subjects connected with this and other matters from my own observation only, I judged that, if left to herself, Mrs. Lomax would have declined the invitation. I could see that she had a horror of Ireland, and that, although she liked O'Neill, she had no desire to have him for a son-in-law. But if the mother's wishes were clear to me, so also were the daughter's.

Miss Lomax had strong opinions upon most subjects, but especially strong were her opinions upon all subjects which concerned herself; and I have no doubt whatever that she insisted upon the acceptance of the invitation; neither have I any doubt that she had determined upon the captivation and subjugation of Harry O'Neill; and I saw that the more he tried to resist her countless fascinations—and, to do him justice, he sometimes did try passive resistance—the more obstinately did she set herself to conquer him; and day by day she had the triumph of gaining ground.

O, how could he be unfaithful to that sweet promised wife of his, who watched him wistfully as every hour

after the arrival of the party at Randlestown he became more and more visibly entangled in the snares of the dark-eyed Adelaide?

Men have certainly strangely elastic hearts and fancies, and no one capable of judgment on such matters could have mistaken O'Neill's state of mind the morning we all breakfasted together in Dublin. He placed himself beside the beautiful English girl; he lost no opportunity of whispering to her those words which express so little but which mean so much; and if she turned from him but for a moment, he would gaze on her with what some one has so forcibly, if also coarsely, called 'hungry lover's eyes;' and I am quite sure that he would at that moment—unromantic and prosaic 9 A.M. as it was—have given a good ten years of his life if he could by any means, foul or fair, have got rid of all those stupid people, myself included, his dear friends and guests, and then and there have tried to win that woman for his own.

But as the gates of our earthly paradise rarely open at our desire, he had nothing for it but to eat a good breakfast, and to exert himself to be agreeable by talking of everything under the sun, except that of which his heart and head were full.

He began by proposing the delay of a day in our journey.

'What do you say, Mrs. Lomax, and you, ladies all, shall we stay in Dublin until to-morrow, and devote to-day to the lions? We have nothing to frighten you on the shores of Lough Neagh but the Banshee, and she howls and appears on state occasions only.'

'And they are—' said Miss Lomax.

'When some of us, the O'Neills, you know, are going to die; or even if some misfortune is going to happen, she gives a squeak or two, just to let us know she's there. I never heard her myself; but my mother

and my cousin Norah swear they did.'

'And did anything happen?'

'I broke my arm at Harrow, that's all. Should you be afraid of her, Miss Lomax?' he added, lowering his voice, as men have a trick of doing when they are, or when they fancy themselves, in love.

'Of all things it is the dream of my life to hear the Banshee.'

I wondered, had she ever heard of the Banshee until that moment?

'I must not wish to be gratified, however,' she added—and now hers was the lowered voice—'for my gratification might mean harm to you.'

'Coffee, sir,' said a waiter at Harry's elbow; and by the time he had helped himself, Miss Lomax, having finished her breakfast, was leaving the room with her mother.

My pretty, gentle little Norah! I may call her mine now that the time of which I write has receded into the dim and distant background of our lives which we call the past. But mine she never was, unless loving her with all my heart made her so; in reality she was nothing to me, and I was less than nothing to her. A friend, perhaps; which is less than nothing to a man who would be all in all. Probably I came next in her estimation to her favourite horse and her pet dog, the giant Newfoundland that attended her in her walks.

We arrived in due time at the Manor, and I was beyond measure anxious that Norah should look well—her 'very best,' as the saying is—when she was introduced to her brilliant rival—for a rival I already called Miss Lomax; but never had I seen her look to such little advantage: her usually pretty colour had faded into that gray leaden hue which invariably denotes fright or nervous agitation of some kind. She was of a singularly nervous and excitable temperament, and her manner was

awkward and constrained. I noticed that when Miss Lomax was introduced by O'Neill to 'My cousin, Miss Fitzgerald,' her arched eyebrows went up, and the faintest possible expression of contempt passed over her beautiful face. Did she think the pale timid-looking girl too insignificant to be a rival? I took for granted that she was aware of the engagement between O'Neill and his cousin; but if so, she never made even a jesting allusion to it. There was one thing I am sure she did not know, and that was, that if Harry went in any way against his mother's wishes in the matter of his marriage, she had power to leave Randlestown away from him. The property was nominally, but not actually, his while his mother lived. Knowing these facts, I was doubly anxious for Norah's future; Harry would probably fulfil his engagement, and make her miserable.

Meanwhile the days passed on. Christmas was spent with unusual gaiety; Norah gradually recovered her looks and spirits, and in her presence Harry was not demonstrative in his attentions to Miss Lomax. One afternoon I joined the walking party, for the reason that Norah had declined skating; so about half a dozen of us started together, two and two. O'Neill, with another half dozen, including Miss Lomax, went on the ice.

I noticed that Harry did not ask Norah to go with them; and when she asked him—with a look I could not have resisted—'Shall I walk or skate to-day, Harry?' he answered, 'Do just as you like.' So she turned away with a little sigh, and did not do as she liked, for she did not stay with him.

The short January day was over, and we were returning home at a brisk pace by the light of the cold frosty-looking stars. The darkness and the clear bracing air had an invigorating and enlivening effect upon

us, for we talked and laughed as we had not done when we could see each other's faces clearly; even Norah seemed in good spirits, and I was very happy, for she walked with her hand upon my arm. But suddenly, as we were passing through a dark part of the long avenue, our gay voices and laughter were checked by the unexpected sound of a long, low, and melancholy cry; it rose upon a wild wailing note almost to a shriek, and then died out again.

Norah dropped my arm, and she would have fallen, had I not been quick enough to catch her.

'The Banshee, the Banshee!' she moaned. 'O, do you not hear it? My God, what is going to happen now?'

'What is it?' cried the other ladies, as they and the gentlemen crowded round us. 'What does Miss Fitzgerald say?'

'O, nothing,' I replied; 'but a cry like that at night coming suddenly—'

As I spoke the wild wail rose again; it seemed quite close to us now, and appeared to be moving on. This time Norah did not speak. She had fainted. I carried her tenderly to the house, and just on the steps we met two of the skating party—O'Neill and Miss Lomax—returning alone from their pleasure.

'What has happened?' cried Harry, on seeing imperfectly by the faint light that I carried something. 'What is it, old fellow? Any one been stealing sheep?'

I brushed past him into the lighted hall; the others crowded after me; he was at their head.

'Your cousin has fainted,' I said then, shortly enough; 'she heard that unearthly cry just now, which is supposed to be the Banshee—some practical joke, of course. Did you hear nothing? Did you meet no one?'

'What nonsense!' he muttered; but a sudden and rapid exchange of

glances passed between him and Miss Lomax; and I at once remembered having heard her boast that she could imitate perfectly any voice, or cry, or call, which she had herself either heard, or heard imitated by another. Was there, then, any connection between her and the Banshee's cry?

Twelfth-day passed, and then, with the exception of Mrs. and Miss Lomax, the guests left the Manor; they lingered on and on, until I lost all patience; but losing patience, of course, hurt no one but myself. I was provoked, too, that no one would sift to the bottom the mystery of the cry which had so terrified poor, gentle, timid little Norah. Lady Mary pooh-poohed the whole thing as if it were fancy on her niece's part. I could not make myself officious in the matter; and presently the subject was forgotten except by me, and, I am sure, by Norah also; but I never spoke of it to her.

Before I, too, left the Manor after my long Christmas visit, for my lodgings in the village, I had another mysterious circumstance to think about. I must, before I briefly relate this new mystery, describe the position of the bedrooms in the Manor-house. They were many in number, and they opened upon one side of a very long gallery; on the other side there was a balustrade, over which you could look down into the handsome hall below. O'Neill had a suite of rooms upon the ground floor; my room was at the end of the gallery, and my door would face any one walking along the gallery from the staircase. Having been over the house a hundred times, I knew that the door next to mine led into a small boudoir or dressing-room, out of which a bedroom opened, which bedroom had also a second door opening on the gallery; and I knew that boudoir and bedroom had been appropriated

to Miss Lomax by Lady Mary's order.

Upon the last night of my visit, not feeling inclined to sleep, I went down-stairs again to read in the library, when the rest of our party had all, as I believed, gone to their rooms for the night. It was one o'clock, when I at length began to feel sleepy; so I then went softly up-stairs. Upon reaching the gallery, however, all desire for sleep vanished, for—I was now facing the door of my own room, remember—to my utter amazement, I saw O'Neill emerge from the door of the boudoir. He was careful to close it noiselessly behind him; he was in his dressing-gown, and his shoeless feet made not the faintest sound upon the soft carpet. I confess that the sudden surprise, and the suspicion which just swept through my mind, made me almost giddy. He must have seen me quite as soon as I saw him, for I carried a light, and so did he.

He came on to meet me smiling. 'Where in the world have you been, Hugh?' he said, without a shade of embarrassment. 'I have just been to your room to look for you. What's the matter? you look quite pale!'

'To look for me?' I said, bewildered, and wondering in my own mind if my sleepy eyes had deceived me. 'To look for me? You did not come out of my room, surely? It was the other door; Miss—'

'Good heavens, D'Alton, are you mad or asleep?' he cried in an angry whisper, and seizing me by the shoulder. 'Take care how you mention a lady's name in that manner. I was in *your* room—yours, and no other. Good-night; you must be more than half asleep to make such a blunder.' And he passed on, with a glance which seemed to me to say, 'Take care how you contradict me.'

I went to my room, anxious to

believe myself under a delusion; but there I found nothing to tell me if what Harry had said was true. Had I gone to the boudoir, I wondered, should I have found any trace of his presence? I went out into the gallery again, just as if by looking about me there I should be able to satisfy myself. Of course I found nothing, except a withered rose, which had been dropped at the dressing-room door. How came the flower there? I do not know to this hour. Harry had had on his dressing-gown, a garment which gentlemen do not usually decorate with flowers. I went to bed, and gave the matter up as one of the thousand unrevealed mysteries which daily occur in our lives.

The days went on, and at last, to my infinite joy, Adelaide Lomax and her mother left the Manor. O'Neill went with them to Dublin, but he stayed away one night only, 'just to see them off,' he said.

Then the bright soft spring weather burst upon us suddenly, and it was welcome after the severity of the winter; and I heard that the wedding-day was fixed for the end of April. I heard the news with that sudden contraction of the heart, and that wild whirl round of the brain, which we all know so well. But what could I do? I loved Norah with a love strong enough to have led me willingly to death for her sake, but could *that* avail? Silent I had been, and silent must I be for ever; but heaven and my own heart knew what I suffered when she looked from the carriage-window in which she and her husband were about to start upon their wedding tour, and waved her last 'good-bye' to the friends who crowded at the door of the Manor-house to see the 'happy pair off.'

'Will she smile like that a year hence?' I said to myself bitterly, as I recalled the strange and still unexplained cry which had so fright-

ened her, and O'Neill's mysterious appearance at the door of his guest's boudoir.

The marriage took place in April; in May, Mr. and Mrs. O'Neill were in London. Norah was presented, and I heard from Lady Mary that she and Harry were enjoying themselves immensely, and also that they saw Mrs. and Miss Lomax frequently. That particular item of news did not delight me; but still less was I pleased to hear that in October the mother and daughter were to pay a second visit to Randlestown Manor. In July the young people came home, and I thought Norah was looking jaded, anxious, and ill; she appeared, too, to be in decidedly low spirits. I said as much to Lady Mary; but I was given to understand that she had felt the heat and fatigue of London rather overpowering, and that Harry had brought her home, as there were 'reasons' why she should 'for the present' be kept as quiet as possible. I suppose it was with a view to the proper carrying out of that object that Harry went to London alone a week or two after his return with Norah; but his absence had not a very soothing effect upon her, for every time I saw her the alteration in her looks for the worse became more perceptible. More than once she asked me, with an earnestness in which there was no hidden jest, if I had ever heard the Banshee since *that* evening. I was able with perfect truth to assure her that I had not.

At last, in August, Harry came back; I had the miserable pleasure of seeing how his young wife revived in his presence, and I tried not to think he was a hypocrite when I saw him humouring all her invalid fancies as a devoted lover-husband should do.

As October drew near I asked her if Mrs. Lomax and her daughter

were expected ; and I shall never forget the expression of her face as she answered : ' I believe so ; I do not feel quite equal to visitors just now, but Harry does not wish to have them put off.'

So they came, Adelaide looking more radiantly lovely than ever ; such a contrast to poor pale Norah. I frankly admit that I felt a most unchristian-like aversion to that brilliant-looking woman, so full of health and spirit, so condescending in her kindness to ' our poor dear invalid,' as she would persist in calling Mrs. O'Neill. As to Harry himself, he was completely infatuated. I saw his state of bondage, if other eyes were blind.

But the end was at hand.

We were all at luncheon together one lovely afternoon towards the end of October, when a telegram came to Harry summoning him to town. ' What a bore ! ' he said, with a quick glance at Miss Lomax ; he never looked at his wife ; she was lying on a sofa drawn up to one of the windows, with her luncheon untasted upon a small table beside her, and her thin white hands folded listlessly upon the scarlet shawl which covered her.

' What a bore ! ' O'Neill repeated. ' I must go up by the last train ; and we had planned such a glorious ride to-morrow.'

' When can you be back, Harry ? ' said Norah's low voice from the sofa.

' As soon as possible, you may be sure,' he answered, with another quick glance at Miss Lomax.

And then luncheon was over and the party dispersed. A *portière* separated the dining-room from the library, and through this *portière* Miss Lomax disappeared alone. I went with a book to a distant window ; my back was to Norah's sofa, and I faced the *portière*. Harry went away to give some orders, he said. ' Lady Mary stayed for a moment with her

daughter-in-law, and then she, too, went away. I do not think Mrs. O'Neill knew or remembered that I was in the room, for she never spoke.

In about half an hour Harry came in again. ' Well, little woman,' he said, going over to the sofa and taking the hand so eagerly stretched out to him by Norah, ' how goes it ? Do you feel pretty jolly this afternoon ? '

As he spoke my eyes were attracted by a cautious movement of the drapery of the *portière*.

' I should be *jollier* if you were not going away, Harry,' the sweet voice replied.

' You goose ! ' he answered, stooping and kissing her in a brisk friendly manner upon the forehead. ' Haven't you learned to do without me yet ? You will know better by and by.'

' Never ! ' she said with quiet distinctness, and there were tears in her voice. Then presently she added, ' Can you really come back soon, Harry ? How soon ? '

' O, in a day or two ; I'll telegraph. We have a big dinner on the 31st, you know ; so I must be here. Don't you get into a fright and think I'm kilt, and never mind if your friend the Banshee screams. Naught was never in danger, you know.'

' Harry,' she cried earnestly, and as she spoke she rose and flung her arms about him, ' do not talk like that ; you have always laughed at me about that awful cry. I have heard it twice, I *know* I have ; and if I hear it again now, while you are away, it will come to tell me that I shall never see you again. Do not laugh, Harry ; I feel sure that the third time, let it come when it will, the blow will fall in some shape or other. Heaven grant that it may fall upon me ! '

My eyes were still upon the *portière* ; how I longed to pull it aside and reveal an unseen listener !

Harry's answer to those pathetic words was another laugh. ' You are

a goose !' he said. ' I suppose you mean to throw yourself into the lake if you hear a disconsolate cat caterwauling while I am away, and—'

' Pray, pray do not laugh,' she interrupted pleadingly. ' I may be a goose, as you say ; but I have a presentiment, which nothing can dispel, that I shall hear that cry a third time, and if I do, Harry, we shall never meet again. I hope you will be left, dear ; you would get on better without Norah than Norah would without you. Ah, I know it but too well !'

' My poor little darling !' he answered with unusual tenderness ; he seemed really touched, and he did not repulse her as she clung to him and sobbed upon his breast.

Without seeing me he passed through the *portière*, where the woman was awaiting him whose presence was blighting the happiness of his young wife.

That evening I dined at the Manor ; but Norah did not appear ; she was tired, Lady Mary said. Miss Lomax was in excellent spirits, and marvellously civil to me (she generally treated me with the coolest indifference) ; challenged me to a game of *bézique*, won with a triumphant score of over 1000 in two deals and then threw up the cards. When, half an hour later, I said good-night to every one she was not in the room.

It was a lovely night, calm and warm, with a bright moon. I stood on the steps of the terrace for a few seconds before starting on my homeward walk, to admire the shimmering light upon Lough Neagh and the soft radiance which brightened the old walls of S—'s castle, the ancient home of the O'Neills—the Manor was on the opposite side of the lake from the castle—and I had fallen into a fit of musing, when I was startled by what seemed to me a faint and subdued imitation of the wild cry which had terrified Norah some months before. I listened ; it

was repeated still more faintly, and it seemed to come from the angle of the house at my right hand. I went quickly round, and, to my intense surprise, almost ran against Miss Lomax. She was sitting on the low step of a glass door which led from the dining-room, and had I not seen her face I might have been excused for taking her for a ghost, for she was wrapped from head to feet in a large white shawl.

' Good gracious, Mr. D'Alton, how you frightened me !' she said almost crossly, and she did look very pale in the moonlight. ' Do you always go literally mooning about in this way, instead of going home like a sensible man ?'

' And may I ask what you are doing here alone ?' I replied. ' I was on my way home, when I heard a strange sort of cry ; it was very faint. Did you hear anything ?'

' I never hear cries,' she answered pettishly. ' The Banshee again, I suppose. Well, let her cry ; she will not frighten any one.'

' Except Mrs. O'Neill.'

' Would she be frightened by it, really, seriously ?' And it struck me that she asked the question very eagerly.

' Probably,' I answered, remembering what Norah had said to her husband.

' Ah, indeed ! What a pity she is so—nervous ! Good-night, Mr. D'Alton. I hope you will not meet this wonderful Banshee ; but I believe she is like a bold child—heard, but never seen.'

' In any case I shall not meet her,' I said ; ' for I leave her behind me at the Manor.'

' What do you mean ?' she said, putting a cold hand into mine, and there was a deep-red flush upon her dark face.

What did I mean ? I meant nothing ; but I remembered that sudden flush and the question some hours later.

The following evening I did not dine at the Manor, but I called in the forenoon to inquire for Norah. She was better and in much better spirits; Harry was expected back to dinner. The evening passed, and another beautiful soft moonlit night came on. I went out for a quiet stroll before I went to bed, and, tempted by the beauty of the scene, I lingered upon the shore of the lake until close upon midnight. I could see the lights in the windows of the Manor—I almost fancied once or twice that soft music came floating to my ears across the water, and I pictured the scene to myself: Miss Lomax at the piano, and Harry leaning over her in rapture; I took for granted that he had come back.

But a sound in which there was no music did come presently; it was that awful unearthly wail supposed to portend suffering or death to an O'Neill. Never before or since have I heard a cry like that, and with all its unearthly cadence there was in it, to my ear, the sound of a human voice. Again, as I listened, it rose and fell, and I saw distinctly a white figure flit for a moment into the moonlight which streamed full upon the grassy slope before the front of the Manor; it turned away from the house and disappeared into a wood which stretched for a considerable distance along the margin of the lake. Without hesitating a moment I started to enter the wood on the village side. 'Banshee or woman, you shall not escape me!' I said. Once during my rapid walk the wild cry rose again.

I entered the wood; the darkness under the trees, of course, shut out every object, and would, I hoped, so shut out my approach that the white figure would be taken unawares. I stopped now and then in my rapid walk to listen, but I heard no step, no sound of any kind, except, as I have said, the wild cry once; but just as I reached the opening leading to the pleasure-ground before the Ma-

nor-house a flutter of white caught my eye. 'Stop!' I shouted loudly; 'I know you!'

At my challenge the flying figure increased its speed. I gave chase; but what could mortal feet accomplish against a spirit? With such a senseless belief I tried to console myself as the white form rapidly gained ground.

But what seemed defeat was, in reality, victory for me. At the moment when the pursuit became hopeless, I saw something flutter to the ground as if from the head of the shrouded figure; it was unheeded. I reached the spot where it had fallen and snatched it eagerly up. Judge of my horror and amazement when, upon examination in the moonlight, it proved to be a handkerchief with the name of 'Adelaide' embroidered in one corner.

Perplexed and made miserable with suspicions to which I dared not give a name, I returned home. Outside the door of my lodgings I found a knot of people assembled; they appeared excited, and they were all talking eagerly.

'Here he is,' I heard a familiar voice say; and Bryan, O'Neill's butler, came forward. He looked as white as fear could make him. 'O, sir,' he gasped, 'where were you? Haven't you heard the cry, sir? Sure it never came like that without bringing trouble — the poor young mistress, sir!'

'Glory be to God this night!' was echoed round among the women as they devoutly crossed themselves.

'What of the young mistress?' I cried; and I knew but too well that bad news was at hand.

'Come up to the house, for God's sake, sir! Sure didn't you hear the cry? And she's taken bad before her time, and my lady sent me off to your honour to see if we could get off a telegram to the master; he didn't come home yet; but isn't it late for this night?'

'Hours too late, but I shall go up to the house, Bryan,' I said, feeling stunned into quiet by the night's work, and by the thought of what might be still before me.

When we reached the Manor, late as it was, the hall-door stood open, and it seemed to me that there was an unusual hush over the whole place. I saw figures in the drawing-room as I passed by the half-closed door on my way to the stairs. I reached the landing, and went quickly towards Norah's room. I knocked softly; the beating of my anxious heart was far louder than the sound my fingers made. The door was opened by Lady Mary herself, and I saw that she was alone; her face was pale and awestruck.

'Have you brought him?' she whispered. 'But I suppose there was no time.'

I shook my head.

'It does not matter now,' she went on; 'he is too late.'

She led me to the foot of the bed, and there upon the pillow, with the sweet eyes closed for ever, I saw the dead face of Norah O'Neill.

To Lady Mary I said no word; it would avail nothing now to arouse her suspicions, but I knew that her son's wife was the victim of what was, perhaps, a practical joke. God forgive me if I wrong the woman who had done the deed, by the thought that she had had an evil purpose in her too good mimicry of the Banshee's wail.

Like a man in a dream I went down-stairs again, and passed into the still lighted drawing-room; it was, to all appearance, empty, and, sitting down, I leaned my head upon the table to shut out the light, and to try and realise what had happened. But my nerves and senses were cruelly awake, and I caught the sound of a step in the room, as though some one was trying to cross it unheard. I looked up and saw Miss Lomax. Yes, there she

was, in her rich evening-dress, with jewels sparkling upon her neck and arms, and her beauty scarcely lessened by the slight shade of pallor upon her cheeks.

'I beg your pardon, I thought you were asleep,' she muttered. 'I am sorry if I have disturbed you; you look tired.'

'Tired! You are too kind,' I said; 'but I do not think there will be sleep for any one in this house to-night, except for her who will never wake again. Unless,' I added, rousing myself to look steadily into her dark eyes, 'it is to insure to yourself a good night's rest, that you, Miss Lomax, walk in the woods at midnight; you lost this in your last ramble;' and I laid the hand-kerchief before her.

A strange expression passed across her face; it seemed to me made up of fear, derision, and triumph.

'How much does he know? Shall I defy him?' it seemed to say. Then her eyelids and her lips quivered, and I knew that she was both guilty and afraid.

'You will not betray me?' she said; and before I could stop her she was kneeling at my feet. 'I meant no harm; I swear to you—'

'Hush!' I said bitterly. 'You best know what your motive was, and no oaths will bring her back to life; her happiness you have long since destroyed. Surely there were men enough in the world to gratify your vanity and your passion—I grew outspoken in the bitterness of my despair—'without taking her husband from her! But you need not fear, I shall not betray you. To do so would not undo what you have done, and I can but hope—and my hope is not for your sake, but for the sake of the man she loved—that no curse will fall upon you, or on him through you; that the real death-cry of the Banshee will never give you cause to remember your imitation of to-night.'

How is it that, in the midst of our greatest misery, the ridicule that attaches itself to the most earnest and even solemn situations can so forcibly strike us? Heart-broken as I was, I could have laughed aloud at my melodramatic position. There I was in the dead of the night, with a beautiful woman kneeling, as it were, at my feet for mercy, while I declaimed above her head with the full fervour of a Kemble or a Kean.

But this feeling passed as I left her still kneeling with her face covered, and went myself from the house in which the sunshine of my lonely life had died out for ever.

Six months later, to his shame let it be recorded, O'Neill married Adelaide Lomax. I am compelled to think, but I have no proof upon which to ground my assertion, that he felt himself bound in honour to make her his wife as soon as possible. Immediately after the marriage Lady Mary left the Manor, to which she never returned; and I have reason to believe that she never saw the second Mrs. O'Neill.

I am not one of those who believe that special punishments invariably follow special sins, but in this instance punishment slow but sure followed Adelaide Lomax, and she still lives to bear the penalty of her crime. When her only child, a son, was about six years old, he was accidentally drowned almost before his mother's eyes in Lough Neagh, and there are many witnesses ready to prove that the night before his death the Banshee's cry was heard for hours echoing round the walls of the castle.

The lovely boy had been the sole link between O'Neill and his once passionately-loved wife. Even before the child's death people said that his father and mother were not

happy; and certainly there was no sign of happiness in Harry's dejected morose demeanour. 'Could it be,' I often thought, 'that too late the memory of the woman who had loved him so devotedly came between him and the woman whom he had loved so blindly?'

From the depression succeeding the death of her son, Mrs. O'Neill rallied after a time, but as her grief subsided her temper became almost ungovernable; and it was whispered in the servants' hall, and from thence the rumour reached the village gossips, that in a wild fit of passion, which almost amounted to delirium, she made some defiant admission to her husband respecting the death of his first wife, which drew from him the epithet 'murderess.' There may be no truth in that rumour, but from the night upon which the terrible scene was supposed to have taken place between the miserable pair they never met again. Harry went to America, to India, Australia, all over the world, and Mrs. O'Neill lived on alone at the Manor, to which no visitors ever came and which she never left.

She was not actually mad—that is, she required no keeper; but sometimes, and especially in the shortening autumn days, she was very far from being in her right mind; and in the soft October nights, when the moon is full and bright, I in my quiet lodgings, and those who still walk about the peaceful village streets, hear a wild wailing cry come echoing with mournful distinctness across the lake, and then we know that the 'mad fit is on,' and that a miserable and, I believe, remorseful woman is wandering alone, alone for evermore, and sending that too perfect imitation of the Banshee's death-cry over the dark still waters of Lough Neagh.

THE HAUNTED MILL

THERE, in the midst of yon low-lying land,
She lived and loved ; that mill and mouldering beech
Witness'd the first-fruits of her dear-bought bliss,

Such trifles as a look, a touch, a kiss ;

There clomb, nor climbing knew, love's hill of sand,

But thought all heaven within her little reach,

How should she hear of Virgil's hapless band ?

What in the myrtle wold Love's martyrs preach,
Made Love's by chrism of Love's cruel hand ?

For never will love with woe be satisfied ;

Sad love, who longs for sighs and tears, as grass,

Burnt grass, for showers, and bees for bitter thyme.

Read but my story, built in rustic rhyme,

About this miller's daughter, the village pride :

How on a New-year's eve it came to pass

Once, long ago, a knave her faith belied ;

How for love's links to her Death bonds of brass

Brought, where that old bridge breaks the brawling tide.

The water flows, as it was wont to flow,

Idly along the meadows, past the mill ;

Only the ground is white no more with meal,

No more the children hear the clattering wheel,

Wondering ; but round it wanton rushes blow ;

The pool beneath the dam sleeps always still ;

On the latch her white hands lifted, to and fro

The spider weaves his dusty web at will,

While on the door-step green lush grasses grow.

Here, when at eve the day to rest has lain,

The dim sick last day of the dying year,

The lated rustic hears in the hum of night,

Or dreams he hears, some sound as soft and light

As the faint murmur of subsiding rain,

And with wide, round, reverted eyes of fear

Sees by the mouldering beech a woman in pain,

While horror battles in his hair to hear

Her timid voice beseeching him, in vain.

And what is that which thus the wight affrays ?

Naught but the airy shape of her, long made

Free of that city where never light nor dew

The rosy-handed hours of morning threw

On long and clear or short and cloudy days.

' Ah, listen ! ' she cries ; but might as well have bade

The sea be still, wheat grow in the city's ways ;

Her soft sad voice none yet has ever stay'd—

None, though so strongly with stretch'd hands she prays ;



THE HAUNTED MILL.

R. P. Lederer, III

Photographer, Inc.

Prays till the cock's crow chides the tardy morn,
 Waiting, and hopes at last to tell her tale—
 So old a tale ! she hopes to tell it still ;
 But only water washing past the mill,
 Only rank wild grass, and the weeping thorn
 Hear her, and pity, till white stars grow pale
 In heaven, and lo ! another year is born.
 Then with such sighs her form is forced to fail,
 As winds wake whispering through a field of corn.

Ah, loved and lost ! ah, sweet and seventeen !
 Like summer fair, and dearer than full sails
 Home-set and long-expected thy neat bands
 Of hair, one hue with the . . . ze of sunset sands,
 Lie tangled with salt weed, and slippery green,
 On some far rock, where lone the hoarse seamew wails,
 Wet weed for daisies where his hand had been ;
 For with these gods nor pity nor prayer prevails,
 Nor is there any to tell us what they mean.

That New-year's eve they quarrell'd. Love, men say,
 These little lovers' angers but renew.
 Not always. Late that night to meet his dame,
 And wet with gathering winter acorns, came
 Her halting lover; she, but all for play,
 Feign'd wrath ; she wish'd him like a woman to sue
 For grace ; he would not ; then she turn'd away.
 To-morrow he at her feet his fault would rue ;
 To-morrow—but those mocking gods said Nay.

For she, her lover's last sad gift to save,
 A toy whose worth love only could esteem,
 A brooch of colour'd glass, and such fine gold
 As pedlars sell, for her of wealth untold—
 Lost by the water's side, had found a grave
 Seeking it, fallen in the deep swift stream.
 But in the morn pass'd by a sorry knave,
 Her suitor scorn'd, and saw in the new sun's gleam—
 Saw, seized, and show'd the gage he swore she gave.

So lying, doom'd her dull swain to despair,
 Who, since he never saw his darling more,
 Deem'd himself fool'd, her false. Alas, but she
 On the swift deep stream drifted out to sea !
 And now, each New-year's eve, though late, yet there
 By the broken bridge, say-kirtled as of yore,
 She yearns to tell a tale for which none care ;
 While long in his head dust-closed are window and door
 For whom her waste words soothe the wintry air.

EILY'S GHOST

BY JAMES BOWKER, AUTHOR OF 'THE GOBLIN TALES OF LANCASHIRE'

WHEN I say that a sheep-dog, a fat little whelp, and a whole family of chickens frequently partook of my morning meal, and that some geese, headed by a patriarchal-looking gander, stood at the door and gazed at the banquet, it will be inferred that my quarters in part of August and September were in a locality somewhat removed from civilisation and the beaten track of tourists. The cottage was distinguished from all others in the district by its name of 'the slated house,' but like most others it had its clay floor, its grateless ingle, whence the ruddy peat sent forth heat and fragrance, the smoke escaping at its will either by the chimney or through the doorway, after having lingered lovingly about the blackened rafters; its 'kist' bed, its foot-square diamondpaned windows, and, above all, its witch-repelling bent sickles. The little place lacked many of the comforts which fashion has deemed to be necessary to existence, but it was healthy—for Hygeia is a fickle goddess, and frequently deserts the sheltered mansion for the hind's hut on the wintry moor—and health-giving was the breeze which, after sweeping over miles of purple heather and pale-green moss, along the

'lone glen of green brecken,
Wi' the burn stealing under the long
yellow broom,'

and through the dark fir-woods, crept into the little cottage, and brought on its wings the odours of innumerable flowers.

The old woman—in whose eyes there was a gleam of good-humour, and upon whose bronzed face years

of peasant life had left but few traces—had not had a day's sickness in her life, though forty years had passed since her firstborn was carried through the little doorway to the distant hillside chapel to be christened; and the husband who then stepped so proudly by her side still marches sturdily over the heathery moors up to the Fairy Castle as though sixty years had not whitened his hair, and his head had not been bowed over the graves of his sons and daughters, who from distant towns returned to the moorland cottage to die and to be laid to sleep with the 'rude forefathers of the hamlet' in the sun- and wind-kissed God's-acre gleaming on the hillside.

If the cottage lacked luxuries, the view from its doorway was like a glimpse of fairyland—Tibradden and Glendoo, purple with sheets of heather, and Kilmashogue, usually sullen in its barren ruggedness, seeming to smile as the sun's rays fell upon a clump of browning bracken or golden gorse; while in the valley, far beneath the little fold in front, the stream, fed by numberless rivulets, rippled away to the sea, a dusty road crossing it by a weird-looking farmhouse with a clump of black-looking pines, and then winding away round the mountain. The little river—for so it was called—could easily be forded anywhere in the vale; and over its clear waters hung lovely bells of the flower in which, according to Wordsworth,

'Bees that soar for bloom
High as the highest peak of Furness
falls,'

will 'murmur by the hour'—the foxglove (folks' or fairies' glove)—a somewhat unusual flower at such an altitude, but a suitable plant for a locality still haunted by fays and feorin. By the sides of the rivulets too were patches of the *fiorin* (*A. alba*), one of God's providence grasses, growing at any height, insensible to extremes of heat and cold, wet or drought, coming before other grasses appear and after their exhaustion, and beloved of all cattle.

Grand in its loneliness and full of sublimity was the scene when the sun sank behind Tibbradden, and the peak of *Sliabh-na-goil*, the lovely hue of which had throughout the day been shimmering through a thin haze, suddenly put on a roseate robe, too bright and beautiful to last, and then slowly faded into the night; when mountain after mountain lost its shape in the dying light, and seemed to loom up heavily into the darkness, out of which came the mysterious whisper of the pine-woods, sounding like the faint voice of many waters, the hushed wash of an unseen weird ocean restless with the secret of its unburied dead.

One night I was alone, watching the moods of Nature, listening to her sweet sad music, the plaintive minor-key harmonies so suggestive of change and seeming death, looking for the coming of the hosts of heaven, Diana and her attendant nymphs—'the lovely stars, the forget-me-nots of the angels'—for the labourers had reached their homes, and the children were huddled in bed, and but for the sharp monotone of the wind's whisper through the fir-wood, the occasional subdued yelp of a distant dog, and the faint tinkle of a sheep-bell, all would have been still as the face of the dead.

Slowly over *Sliabh-na-goil* rose the pallid moon; here and there a trembling star peeped out from her vantage-ground; and gradually one

by one the huge shapeless masses around stood out against the sky and assumed their old forms, Tibbradden, Glendoo, and Kilmashogue, once more; a flood of glory swept down their rugged weather-beaten breasts, and faintly visible was the purple of the heather and the golden yellow of the solitary cornfield, backed by the peat-moss with its little stacks of drying turf, which in the dim light looked like stones in a black and haunted graveyard where no tears ever were shed or grass grew.

Surely, thought I, it is not to be wondered at that the dwellers on these mountain-sides should people the gloomy glens and gorges, the fearsome fir-forests, the moors and morasses, with beings of another order, with *thigha*, *sheeog*, *banshee*, and 'good people,' for even in the moonlight the place is weird enough; but in winter, when in the darkness the snow swirls about the little window, the frozen hail is dashed against the door, and the wild blast tears the few withered leaves from the mountain-ash at the gable, the wailing wind must sound like the voice of the *bocheentha* with its warning of death.

Thinking thus, I saw a dark object coming towards me from the cromlech on the side of Tibbradden, and for a moment my heart beat a little faster; but as the figure approached, instead of grisly giant from the cairn, I recognised a well-known human form.

'Is that Andy?'

'Begorra, an' it's meself it is.'

'What has kept you up the mountain, Andy? I thought everybody feared to be out of doors at this hour.'

'Shure, yer honour, I've bin waitin' for a hawk comin' back to his nest on the giant's grave yonther, and it's better he'd be wid me nor murtherin' the weeny birds. *Sha gu dheine*; but I'm not afeard

o' bein' out wid yerself, though it is in the haunted *glounthaan* ye are.'

' Haunted is it, Andy? Here, fill your pipe, and whatever the goblin may be, let us have the tale of it.'

' Long life to yer honour, sure an' this is a trate,' said Andy; and as the smoke from the weed curled gracefully beneath the rim of his slouched hat, he commenced :

' It's forty year an' more sin' Jimmy Magrat wir married to one of the finest colleens in Glencree, an' brought her home wid him to the tatched cottage beyant the bridge. Sure 'twas himself was the proud man that day, for a purtier crayther never entered the valley nor Eily, wid' her laughin' eyes; and many an achin' heart there wir acoorse ov her roguish look an' her witchin' smile. Bedad, an' St. Kevin himself couldn't hav been unkind to the likes of her, the darlint; an' her voice too wir like the cooin' or of wood-pigeon; an' when she would be singin' the *Pastheen Fion*, it's myself as would be afther cryin' wid the swateness ov it.

' Well, they hadn't bin at the cottage very long afoor a stranger came an' tuk up his lodgin' in old Molly's shebeen, at the end of the Devil's Gap yonther. He wir a wild-lookin' young man, wid a look on him as iv he'd lived in foreign parts, and there wir a dale o' wontherin' who he was, and what it was he wir afther; for the fight in '98 left the folks for many a long year wondersome about strangers bein' informers and the like. However, it wir soon found out as Eily knew him, but seemt unwilling to cast her bright eyes on him when he foort himself on her company in the yard afther Mass, and walkt alongside o' her an' Jimmy; and Jimmy didn't purtend to like him nayther. Soon afther, sure enough, it laked out among the folks—for owd Molly had larnt it from the lad himself—

that he and Eily wir from the same glen, an' had been weenies together, an' lovers too, afoor the lad wint to the Haste Ingies, an' as Eily had swapped rings wid him, and swoor on the beads she'd wait for him, an' not change her life, not iv he wir a hundred years bringin' back the fortin he wir gooin' afther.

' Musha, the poor lad hadn't been gone very long afoor Jimmy Magrat begand pestherin' her wid waitin' for her ov a Sunday; an' what wid his blarney an' his desateful tongue, an' the gossip ov the naybours, it warnt two years afoor their names were cried. It wir said, too, that Eily's father foorted her to resave Jimmy, for the lad she'd tied hersel' to on the beads wir but a sailor seekin' his fortin, an' Jimmy had four bastes, an' a pig or two, an' a bit o' land ov his own round his tatched cottage, an' could cut a field ov wate wid anybody. Owd Molly said too as Denis Callanan—for that wir the lad's name—had vowed that, though Eily had bruk her word wid him, he still loved the print ov her purty foot an' the dust she stepped on, an' he wouldn't lave the sight ov her till the money he'd arnt in the Ingies wir done, but he'd haant her an' reprooch her wid her desate to him.

' Sure an' afther that stoory got about thir wir great unpleasantness wid Jimmy an' the colleen, an' by degraas they got a-quarrelin' about Denis; an' like enough too, for he wir about the lanes day an' night, an' foort hisself on Eily sowheer she wint. An' it wir said that one Sunday, when Jimmy didn't goo wid her to the chapel, for he'd had a ddrop o' the craythur the night afoor, Denis overtuk her along the road an' would walk wid her, an' did walk wid her to her door, an' Jimmy lifthed his hand against her an' bated her. Arrah, an' afther that the poor thing changed entirely; her sperit was bruk, an' she

no longer stepped out along the lane—for she'd the natest foot I ever sin—an' sorra a one ov us ever heared her sing or laugh. Father Rooney, now wid the saints, tried to bring pace atween them, an' begged Denis to take his blessin' an' goo away from wheer he wir doin' nothin' but bringin' sorrow and mischief; but the lad wouldn't goo.

'Afther a bit Jimmy got too fond entirely o' potheen, an' one evenin', when he had the ddrop in him, he went down to old Molly's, an' nothin' would keep him quiet but fightin' wid Denis—for Denis taant-ed him wid havin' struk the colleen—an' sure enough, big an' strong as Jimmy wir, the sailor gav' him a batin.'

'Well, becase o' this, no love wir wasted atween the two men, an' they tried to be out o' the way o' one another; for afther Father Rooney—rest his soul!—had asked the sailor to lave the valley and goo away to the Ingies again, he never went wid'in a mile o' the chapel Sunday or saint-day.

'One night, at the beginnin' o' winter, ther wir Mick Mahoney's wake beyant the cross-roads, an' owd Molly went, for she was a relation ov the did man's; an' as luck would have it—moor's the pity—she tuk Denis wid her. Sure enough, Jimmy and Eily wint too, for half a scoore men an' women came from beyant the bridge. Things went but quare for a while; but afther Denis had spook a few words to the colleen, widout sayin' wid your lave or by your lave, he left the place widout havin' tasted a ddrop. Well, the folks got a bit merrier, an' ast Eily to sing *Cusheen Loo*; but she tuk a dale o' persuadin', and Jimmy jump't up an' says to her, says he, "An' mebbi ye'd like the chap fray the Ingies to ax ye?" Wid which the poor crayerter beginned the song, but bruk down in the middle an' set off a-

cryin'. Well, some of the min blamet Jimmy for spaykin' to the loikes ov her in that way, for she wir a good poor thing; an' though the mourners struck up the *Keenthechaun*,* the gatherin' wirn't a happy one, an' two or three ov the wimmin wanted to lave; an' Eily said she'd go wid 'em as far as the bend, wheer she would be but a few minutes across the river to her cottage. Sure enough they laft, for Jimmy wir still bad tempert, an' said she could goo wheer she liked; so the men stopped wid him to finish the potheen. Well, the boys got noisy over the dhrink, and one ov em wir botherin' Jimmy about the batin' the sailor had guy him; till Jimmy got up and laft the house, sayin' he'd find Denis where-somever he wir, an' murther him entirely. He'd a ddrop in him, but it wir light when he left, an' as he knew every stone on the road, no notice wir took ov him.

'Two or three hours afther this he wir back wid marks ov blood on his face an' clothes, an' sober enough, but lookin' as if he sin a *fetch*; an' he said he found Denis an' bated him well, but that he'd bin home an' Eily warnt there. One ov the min said as mebbi Eily had gone wid the wimmin folk for a gossip, an' if Jimmy had wanted her he should have gone to the cottages. Upon this nothin' would shuit Jimmy but he must goo in sarch ov her; but he axed the did man's son Mike to goo wid him, an' accoordinly off they started. Mike said 'at afther that Jimmy wir contrary, an' wouldn't goo the nearest way to the cottages beyant the bridge, though the night had turnt wet an' stormy, but astid o' followin' the footpath on the bog an' over the steppin'-stones at the river by the end o' the wood, would goo by the road. Nuthin' could be larnt ov

* Funeral song in praise of the dead, sung by paid mourners.

the colleen, howiver, an' Mike suggested as mayhap Jimmy's trate-
ment ov hir had hurted her, an'
she'd started off over the mountain
to her father's holding in Glencree.
Jimmy got into a rage wid this, an'
axed Mike if he'd goo wid him to
the Devil's Gap to see iv Denis wir
theer. That time they wint by the
path, an' when they reached the
shebeen they found owd Molly
smookin' her dudheen by the sod
o' turf, but no Denis theer, an'
Molly said she hadn't sin the face
ov him sin he laft the wake.
"Mebbi," says she, "an' happen it's
yerself, Jimmy Magrat, shudn't won-
der if yez never get a glance o' the
colleen again, the saints between us
an' harm, afther lifthin' yer hand
agin her, the darlint."

'Well, Jimmy tuk very pale wid
her narashun, an' wantit to pacify
her wid havin' some potheen, but
Molly said niver a dhrop o' the
crayther or a mouthful o' male
should he get under her tatch; so
the pair ov em left the shebeen and
made up the hill to the cottage, an'
sure, widout a word o' welcome,
Jimmy went in, an' laft Mike to get
home to the farm wheer the did
man lay in his coffin.

'Well, sur, sure enough next
morning a gossoon went down to
the steppin'-stones afther pinkeens,
an' strayed into the fir-wood, where
he came upon the body of Eily
lying just widin the stone fence
beneat a clump o' bracken, an' he
ran up the hill an' home, scared wid
the sight of her. When the people
wint to the place it was seen that
the poor colleen had been trailed
from the steppin'-stones an' over
the wall into the wood. Jimmy
Magrat wir fetched, an' sure enough
he wir found in the cottage, wid the
dudheen in his mouth just as if the
crayter warnt missin'; an' when
he rayched the wood, widout givin'
a look at the poor thing, he said as
Denis had murthered her, for he'd

heeart him at the wake pestherin'
her an axin' her to lave her home
wid him, but she'd trayted the
willin wid scorn.

'Musha, but it seemt likely enough,
the folks said, an' the murthered
Eily wir carried to the nearest cabin.
Not a word could be larned o'
Denis far or near, an' the fowks
said he'd made his way to the say,
an' had started again for the Ingies.
The doother said as Eily had been
struck down into the water, an'
afther she'd bin droundhed the
murtherer had dragged her into the
field an' over the stone fence into
the fir-wood. Sure an' ther wir a
mystery over it, for the naybors
didn't like to say as Denis, such a
quiet poor lad as he wir, had kilt her.

'Afther Eily wir buried in the
old graveyard Jimmy Magrat lived
a desarted life in his cottage, smook-
in' an' drinkin' the day through,
an', istid o' tryin' to make his sowl,
never gooin' to Mass, an', what was
moor noticed, never venturin' out
even into the haggart after sunset.

'In a while he parted wid his bit
o' land an' his stock, an' set off to
Ameriky, an' not a word's bin
heard on him since.'

'And Denis?'

'Ah, sur, sure an' I'm comin' to
it. About a year afther Jimmy had
left, the gorse wir fired an' a skeleton
Wir found, an' round the neck ov
it wir a bit ov a chain wid a ring
fastent to it, an' Denis's old father
from beyant Kilakee swoor it wir
the love-token Eily had swapped
wid his lad when he went away to
the Ingies. I'm no scholard myself,
yer honour, an' can't explain it to
the likes o' ye, but the doother said
as Denis too had been struck down
an' murthered, an' trailed up the
heather.'

'And does Eily haunt the glen,
Andy?'

'Denis an' Eily, yer honour; an'
it's said by thuse who have seen it
that every night they pass along

here by wheer wir sittin,' an' down the hillside an' as far the steppin'-stones yonther. But the blessed saints protect us, they're yon ! and Andy convulsively grasped my hand in his and gazed wildly along the road.

Two white objects as of mist were visible in the moonlight, came nearer, passed us so closely that I was chilled by them, then seemed to swirl down the footpath along the end of the fir-wood, and vanished at the stepping-stones.

What they were I know not, and probably never will know on this side the boundary stream ; but I daresay the sceptical reader will smile in the belief that the phantoms were the creation of a disordered nervous system, unusually excited by the story of the murder

and the weird surroundings of the scene, and that my nerves of vision being affected I saw merely what fancy suggested.

I can only assert that I never was in better health in my life ; that clear-sighted and clear-headed Andy first perceived the figures, which for some time were in the moonlit road at a distance from the shade of the pine-wood ; and that as they passed I not only gazed upon them but also felt their presence, cold as though a dense rain-cloud had encircled us.

Whatever they were we rapidly made our way to the little cottage, with its mountain ash and bent sickle ; and as we hurried through the heather Andy solemnly assured me that we too had seen Eily and Denis.

IN THE VAULT

IN the vault—at night and alone ;
In the vault, so dark and still,
Where the air is damp and chill,
And the green mould clings to the stone.
No place in which Beauty to lay,
Yet Beauty and Love lie here ;
Beauty that lived a year,
And Love that bemoan'd it a day.
Lie quiet, O ice-fetter'd heart !
Tremble not, bosom of clay ;
He comes not to weep or pray—
In his life thou hast lost thy part.
O, dull leaden eyes, remain seal'd,
And, mouldering limbs, be still ;
A balm is found for the ill,
The incurable wound is heal'd.
How long since he left thee to sleep,
Left thee, with sobbing, down here ?
Since his blame could cause thee fear,
Or his praise excite thee to weep ?
Canst thou count the time thou hast lain
Wrapt in a rest so profound ?
I tremble to know no sound
Could rouse thee to joy or to pain.
O, marvellous shimmer of gold
Encircling a sculptured head !
Rare pallors by Death bespread !
Can such memories e'er grow cold ?
Sweet eyes, that shall ne'er again see—
Dimm'd violets, sunk and shut—

I marvel he could forget,
E'en though he forgot them *for me* !
Which of us has he served the worst ?
He laid thee in Death's embrace,
Then fickle, forgot thy face ;
But he render'd my life accursed !
On my conscience he placed a ban ;
He robb'd me of peace and rest,
And kill'd the heart in my breast,
By destroying my faith in man.
Arouse thee, then, for my relief !
Freed spirit, avenge my pain—
Thy loss, which begat my gain—
And haunt him with memories of grief !
No answer. The solemn closed eye,
The cold hands folded in peace,
Tell of all passions' surcease :
If thou canst forgive, why not I ?
I kneel to thee, angel at rest,
I stifle my sobbing prayer ;
I breathe a holier air,
Diffused by thy silent behest.
We shall meet him, sister, above—
To stand, as we live, alone—
Where none will strive for his own,
But be lost in infinite love ;
Where hearts shall be purged of unfaith ;
And resting on what is sure,
Sleep on thou, sweetly secure,
And I will be patient for death !

FLORENCE MARRYAT.

THE PRIDE OF THE CORBYNS

BY MRS. G. LINNÆUS BANKS, AUTHOR OF 'GOD'S PROVIDENCE HOUSE,'
'STUNG TO THE QUICK,' ETC.

I. THE LAST OF THE CORBYNS.

DEATH stood knocking at Archibald Corbyn's door—not at the door of Corbyn Hall, but at the door of the Corbyn heart; and when that had ceased to beat, one of the oldest, wealthiest, proudest, and most aristocratic families in Barbadoes would be extinct.

It was a boast of Archibald that the highland district, in the north-west of which Mount Hillaby is the centre, owed its name of Scotland to the loyalty of the first Corbyn, who, settling beneath the shadow of those conical hills, first cleared away dense forests of the bearded fig for the better cultivation of cotton.

He was one of those nine British merchants who, in the reign of Charles I., landed and built Bridgetown as a commercial dépôt, each having a grant of a thousand acres, contingent on the payment of forty pounds of cotton annually to Sir William Courteen, the original founder of the colony. Tracing down the family history, Archibald would tell with a glow how another Corbyn had introduced the sugar-cane into the island, in spite of troublous times, and how he erected the first primitive windmill to crush out the sap, when he had only open-air boilers in which to crystallize that sap into golden sugar and golden coin.

Riding home from St. Andrew's church on one of these occasions with his old friend and shipping-agent, Matthias Walcot, by his side,

he pointed to a mound, below which two streams, rushing right and left of Corbyn Hall from the mountains, there met at a sharp angle, and ran on to join Church River until that ended in a lakelet known as Long Pond, partially barred by sand and vegetable wash from the sea.

'There, Matthias,' he said, 'the first Corbyn roof-tree stood, just where that group of courida-trees now casts a shadow over the grass. It was but a rude wooden shed with palm-leaf thatch—old Cuffy has a better now—but young colonists have to rough it, and if a man has pith in him, what matter?'

As they turned from the white mountain road into the long avenue of sandbox- and cocoanut-trees, and neared his handsome two-floored, square, stone mansion, with pillared-piazzas and overhanging balconies on three sides, overgrown with creepers and standing picturesquely against a background of white clay-tipped, rugged, dark-brown rocks variegated with waving cane-fields, he told how he owed the substantial abode before them to the spirit of desolation which, riding on the wings of devastating hurricanes, had in two successive centuries swept homesteads and plantation into one indiscriminate wreck.

'That was in 1780, when Jamie Corbyn, my grandfather, was the owner. He was a man with pith in him, was Jamie; and when he saw his plank walls flying about like so many palm-leaves, he just



made up his mind to build under a sheltering nook of the hills; and since stone came almost as handy as wood, he built a house that should stand during his lifetime and his son's after him.'

'Well, Mr. Corbyn, it is an ill wind that blows no one good,' Mr. Walcot put in. 'It blew the Corbyns a house that will last.'

Archibald's mood changed; he sighed heavily. 'Ay, friend Matthias; it did blow the Corbyns a home to last—a home sacred from intrusion. Our dead were washed out of their graves, and my grandfather, horrified, planned and built yon solid half-sunken mausoleum at the extremity of the wood to receive the ancestors the hurricane had unearthed. And there he too lies, with his sons and daughters in niches by his side; and there I in time shall be laid, with no child nor relative to mourn or follow me. My dear brother Charles lies under the sea, and I am the last of the Corbyns,' with another sigh. 'He built a home for the living and a home for the dead, to serve for many generations to come; but I am the last of my uncontaminated race, and when the mausoleum doors close upon me they will close for ever.'

Uncontaminated! Ah, there the full pride of the Corbyns spoke out. No drop of Indian or negro blood flowed in Corbyn veins. He was pure white as his first English ancestor; could stand the test of any hotel in the United States, and draw his fingers through his hair without showing a tinge of blue in his oval nails, or the slightest 'kink' in his flowing locks,—a grand distinction this in Barbadoes, where so few even of the wealthy planters but had a taint of the creole in their composition, however infinitesimal. And no West Indian could more fully appreciate the value of the vaunt than Matthias Walcot.

But Death, knocking at Archibald Corbyn's door, was growing clamorous, and black blood or white would be all as one within the hour.

Dr. Hawley and Matthias Walcot stood by his bedside, and Dinah, his old negro nurse, readjusted his disordered pillow or wiped the heavy dew from his clammy forehead with gentle sympathetic hands, and watched his wasted fingers pick the counterpane with sad forebodings.

With quick intelligence she caught the meaning of a glance from the doctor to Mr. Walcot, and escaping from the chamber by the open window, with her big black hands before her face, she leaned over the edge of the balcony to sob out of sight and hearing.

Yet her own ears were alert for any sound from the sick-room, and presently the faint voice of her dying master attracted her attention. True to negro instinct, curiosity arrested grief. She crept nearer to the open window.

He was saying, in feeble gasps, 'Will in my desk—I've left you—sole executor, Matthias. I know I can trust you. Use my slaves well, and—no whipping, Matt!'

There was a pause. The doctor administered a stimulant; Archibald evidently revived.

'And, Matthias—I—charge you—leave no stone unturned—find a Corbyn to inherit—Charlie's dead body never found—may be after all—I—not—last of the Corbyns. Mausoleum close for ever—Corbyns extinct—pure race—'

The voice was lost in indistinct murmurs. There was silence.

'He's gone!' whispered Mr. Walcot; 'hush!'

The doctor placed a finger on his lips, and with the other hand checked Dinah's impulsive return to the room.

'Matthias—England—advertise—I have—last Corb—'

Close the jalousies : exclude the light. The master of Corbyn Hall can neither see the sunshine nor hear the universal wail that from every corner of that wide estate follows his soul to the gates of heaven and pleads for its admission. Archibald Corbyn, too proud of birth to do aught unworthy his pure blood, has been a master without peer !

There was a small grating in the thick door of the mausoleum, which was reached by a descent of four or five steps. This entrance, which fronted a by-road, was bricked up. The mausoleum itself was a solid stone structure, with little or no attempt at ornament ; externally about fourteen yards square, with a domed roof rising not more than four feet above the level of the road ; the ground on all four sides sloping downwards towards the building. It was consequently in a deep hollow, and was further sheltered from high winds by the hills which rose steeply above the road on the other side, and by the wood of manchineel- and sandbox-trees, which had marched up to its three sides like a protecting army of giants. Here and there might be seen rotten stumps of cocoanut-trees, destroyed by a general blight long before Jamie Corbyn made his Machpelah among them and brought the dead to the dead.

Though they were clothed with parasitic verdure, they had a weird aspect on a moonlight night, these ghostly skeletons of forgotten forest-palms.

It was mid-day. The ripe pendulous pods of the thorny sandbox-tree burst one after another, and scattering their seed-rings to earth with sharp reports, as if a platoon of distant musketry proclaimed the fall of each. But another ripe seed was ready to be 'sown in corruption,' and a louder report proclaimed that.

It was the invariable gun fired

through the unbricked grating, to dissipate noxious gases generated within, lest the opening of the vault for the dead should let out pestilence on the living.

A night had passed. Intelligence had flown swift-winged over the little island. The vault was purified ; the door stood open. From all parts of Barbadoes planters and others had assembled to show their respect for the dead. Rising and falling with the undulations of the hills, a long procession of carriages and pedestrians marked the white road with a line of black for half a mile or more. Slaves and friends, bond and free, white, creole, quadroon, mulatto, and black, were there with sable suits and white head-gear ; but of all those hundreds, not one relative to hold the pall or shed a tear over the silver-mounted black coffin as it was borne to its niche in the sepulchre with solemn funeral rites ; and the door was closed on hospitable Archibald, the 'last of the Corbyns.'

'Brick it up close, Dan,' said centenarian Cuffy to the labourer at work ; 'nebber be opened no more. Massa nebber rest in him grave if a drop of nigger blood be berried with him. An' I'm 'fraid, Dan, there be no real white massa to come after good ole massa.'

'Fraid not, Cuffy?' questioned Dan ruefully—for Cuffy was the oracle of the plantation—adding, 'Ah, him proud gemp'lman, but him berry good to black man. Wonder who be massa now?'

A momentous question this to a slave !

Cuffy extended his withered arm to an opening between the distant foliage, where a glimpse of the shining Atlantic might be seen three miles away.

'Ib dat hungry sea swallow up young Massa Charles, I much 'fraid, Dan, Massa Walcot will be. *He* got a splash ob colour in *him*, but

his heart no so warm as our poor massa's for all dat ;' and old Cuffy turned away mournfully, shaking his head.

Corbyn Hall had got a new master. The will which made Matthias Walcot sole executor made him virtually proprietor.

All that stood between him and absolute ownership was the very improbable chance that Archibald's younger brother, Charles, had escaped when the Mermaid, in which he had sailed from Bristol seven years before, foundered off the Irish coast, and not a soul was known to be saved. There was also the remote possibility of his having left a legitimate heir on dry land ; but as no echo of wedding-bells had ever wafted to the brother in Barbadoes, this was as improbable.

The brothers had parted in anger ; and Archibald had never been his own man after the Mermaid went down. He was only forty-eight when he died ; and his will was full of mournful regret. Matthias was enjoined to spare no cost, neglect no means to find a rightful heir ; but if within ten years no claimant could be discovered, then—and not till then—Matthias Walcot and his heirs were to possess the Corbyn estate with all its living brood in perpetuity.

Matthias Walcot passed as an honourable man amongst men ; had been esteemed and trusted by the dead ; would have resented the charge of dishonesty. But the temptation was great, and *he* was *not*.

Prompt to take possession, he was not prompt in measures which *might* eventually oust himself and his. He made languid official inquiries at first ; sent occasional advertisements to an English newspaper ; and persuaded himself, and tried to persuade Dr. Hawley, that he had been very active.

II. THE WALCOTS AT HOME.

I SAID Corbyn Hall had a new master ; I should have said a mistress and three masters, a younger lady being thrown in. There was Mrs. Walcot, dominant, of large dimensions and lofty pretensions ; there was Miss Walcot, slight, languid, listless, and intensely fashionable ; and there were two sons, William and Stephen, the most bumptious of all bumptious Barbadians.

What a revolution their advent created in that hospitable, free-and-easy bachelor household ! The will interdicted unnecessary change until heirship was determined. But Mrs. Walcot was disposed to read its provisions liberally. She did not sell or destroy plain or old-fashioned fittings : they were simply huddled into a lumber-room out of her way, and replaced with the very brightest and newest importations from Europe, before even the dogs and horses had well learned to recognise the new mastership.

Matthias himself forgot he was only executor. He turned his shipping agency and his stifling office on the wharf over to his tall sons, and settled down comfortably at Corbyn Hall as proprietor and planter. But Mrs. Walcot was fond of society, and was not content to dwell for ever ten miles from town and two or three from their nearest neighbours ; so their old house at the Folly was retained, ostensibly for the convenience of William and Stephen, and the lady rejoiced in a town-house and a country-house, and became a very grand personage indeed. She oscillated between the two houses, paid and received visits, went shopping, and ransacked the heterogeneous stores of every dealer in Broad-street, to the intense disgust of Scipio, her mulatto charioteer, whose lazy life was at an end.

Nor was Scipio the only grumbler on the estate. Flippant lady's-maids invaded the sanctity of Chloe's kitchen and Cassy's laundry. Will and Steve in house or stable were as ready to use their riding-whips on the shoulders of valet or groom as on the flanks of their steeds. There were sharp overseers in the boiling-sheds, on the rocky slopes amongst the waving yellow canes and the changeful fields of Indian corn, and among the bursting cotton-pods. The change sank into the negro heart, and from Chloe in her kitchen to Cuffy in his distant hut, there were sunken spirits and low-voiced murmurings. If a 'boy' carried his dish of cuckoo to window or doorsill, or squatted on mat or ground outside to eat his dinner at ease, he was sure to become the centre of a group no longer shaking their fat sides with laughter, but shaking their woolly heads mysteriously, and comparing the present *régime* with the past.

Dinah—or aunt Dinah, as she was called—who had nursed the infant, sick, and dying Corbyns for two generations, and ruled supreme in Archibald's time, had been deposed, and the poor old thing fretted much, as might any other prime minister in disgrace.

It was none of Mr. Walcot's doing. Had he been consulted, he might have remembered her presence in the planter's death-chamber, and from motives of policy left her to govern her coloured brood as of yore.

Yet even he knew not what she had heard, nor how it had worked in her brain. As it was, she brooded over her dying master's words, and felt their import greater than reality.

Old Cuffy—still the nominal head-gardener—she made the depositary of her knowledge, and the pair held frequent and solemn con-

ference. From these twain, no doubt, the first faint murmurings against Walcot rule went out like a breath, as soft and unsuspected. And now aunt Dinah was troubled with ominous dreams, and Cuffy grew portentously prophetic.

Meanwhile Mrs. Walcot, blessedly obtuse, prepared to give a grand ball before the rainy season should set in, with one match-making eye for Laura and another for William, who had set both his on a lovely orphan heiress, then the ward of the Rev. John Fulton.

Vainly Matthias, with due regard to appearances, urged that it was 'too soon.' Madam was wilful, and issued her invitations to the cream of Barbadian society, with a select few of her former Bridgetown friends, whom she hoped to overpower with her grandeur.

Mourning was all but discarded : a gauzy black scarf for herself, a black sash for Miss Walcot, were all that memory could spare for the late master of the mansion whose family diamonds they wore. The coloured attendants were arrayed in the gayest of tints : brilliant turbans, kerchiefs, and petticoats, flashing striped trousers and light jackets, fluttered everywhere, like swarms of black-bodied butterflies, to which every guest-bringing phaeton added its quota, either in driver or lackey.

Odour of fruits and flowers and wines, flash of glass and gilding, wax-lights and mirrors, sparkle of eyes and jewelry, flutter of satins, gauzes, and hearts, patter of feet and tongues, melody of piano, guitar, and song within.

Banjo and beating feet, the rollicking song and the dance, a babel of laughter and gabble without; and Cuffy and Dinah sullenly aloof in the shadow of a manchineel-tree—the only two to whom Mrs. Walcot's magnificent ball had

brought neither pleasure nor occupation.

The hooting owls in the sand-box-trees were scarcely such birds of ill-omen to the Walcots as were these two, brooding over that festival as being an indignity to the memory of their dead master.

Song, and dance, and rippling laughter, flushing cheeks and fluttering fans! A shrill scream, like that of the Shunammite's son—'My head, my head!'—and with one hand spasmodically raised to her brow, Laura Walcot fell back into the arms of her partner in the quadrille, speechless and gasping!

In vain ladies proffered scent-bottles and vinaigrettes, and gentlemen darting through the open casements brought back clusters of soft sandbox-leaves to bind on her throbbing forehead, as antidotes to pain. The dark green but served to show how deathly was her pallor; and Dr. Hawley, brushing in through the crowd from the card-room, could do little more than shake his head gravely, and say, 'No use, no use! Too much excitement!'

Mrs. Walcot shrieked in hysterics; Matthias sat with bowed head like one stupefied; the haughty brows of William and Stephen lowered in presence of the grim intruder—Death.

Startled visitors departed, or remained for the ceremonial of the morrow. An awful hush fell over and around the mansion. The negroes, strangely unlike themselves, indulged in no noisy demonstrations of grief. They were silent, save when whispers of 'Doom' and 'Judgment' passed from mouth to mouth in stifled undertones.

As the white coffin of the maiden was being carried into the house, Cuffy, standing under the piazza, heard William Walcot give Dan

instructions for the opening of the Corbyn mausoleum.

Uplifting his head and his bony hands in superstitious horror, he clasped them as they dropped before him, and ejaculated: 'There! Berry young Missy Walcot in Corbyn grabe! Nebber! Old massa's flesh creep in him shroud if dat blue-nailed missy laid inside there!'

The tall old man, venerable with the grayness of his hundred years, drew a long breath, then stalked unbidden into the presence of Matthias and Dr. Hawley, and stood before them erect, with fiery eyes, much as Elijah must have stood before usurping Ahab.

'Massa Walcot better not berry him dead with the Corbyn dead. Sure's you live, Massa Arch'bald nebber 'low it!'

'Not allow it, Cuffy! What do you mean?' said Mr. Walcot testily, looking up amazed and annoyed.

'Massa Corbyn leave him hall, leave him plantation, leave him money to him friend; but him keep de Corbyn maus'lum for de Corbyn only. IF—and undaunted Cuffy laid special emphasis on the 'if'—'IF no heir, an Massa Arch'bald be last ob de Corbyns, den dat maus'lum be close till Judgment-day!'

'Cuffy, you presume on your gray hairs. I shall lay my poor child where I think fit. I do not suffer my slaves to dictate to me. Your mind is wandering. Quit the room; this is no season for intrusion.'

Dr. Hawley listened in silence. Cuffy still maintained his ground.

'Massa Walcot, de 'mighty God above send Cuffy to warn you. Dere am *doom* on dis house till Corbyn heir be found, and de first thun'erbolt fell last night. For own sake, Massa Walcot' (Cuffy never said 'massa' only); 'berry pretty missy in de churchyard!'

A similar scene was enacted upstairs.

Dinah, arranging the folds of the fine muslin shroud, and the fan-shaped face-cover to stand stiffly up until the last moment, made way for the bereaved mother to kiss the pallid lips ere it was folded down. She ventured to ask the place of interment.

Being told, she bent her aged knees, and implored her mistress to change her plans, or evil would be sure to come of it.

Mr. and Mrs. Walcot were alike obdurate and indignant. Cuffy and Dinah were declared crazy and superstitious, and cautioned to make less free in future.

But though they laid their daughter's corpse in the Corbyn mausoleum, in spite of premonition, for some innate reason they did not place it in any one of the unfilled niches ; it was left on the floor in the centre of the sepulchre.

And then the Corbyn vault closed for the first time on one of another name and another caste.

III. THE MYSTERY OF THE MAUSOLEUM.

IT is not customary for Barbadians to court the heavy noxious dews and the bloodthirsty mosquitoes by being abroad after nightfall ; but the unwonted events of ball and burial on two consecutive days had brought to that lonely plantation a concourse of people, some of whom were detained by the claims of friendship, others of business, to a late hour.

It was close upon midnight when Dr. Hawley and another friend shook hands with Mr. Walcot under the portico of the Corbyn mansion ; and stepping into his light canephæton, he bade his black Jehu, 'Tear away home.'

Once clear of the sombre avenue, where accommodating fireflies hung out their tiny lamps, the white

marly road shone like a streak of silver in the bright moonlight. They spun along rapidly, to the drowsy music of their own wheels, in concert with the droning trumpet of obsequious mosquitoes and the thin metallic pipe of an occasional cicada, to which their pony's hoof beat time. Otherwise the stillness was unbroken, save by Sambo's involuntary ejaculations to the steed.

As they neared the point where the road branched off to the sea-coast, passing the mausoleum on its way through Corbyn Hall Wood, a shrill scream was borne up the by-road on the clear midnight air.

The pony stopped involuntarily, quivering in every limb.

'Golla, massa ! what am dat ?' cried Sambo in a fright.

Before Dr. Hawley or his friend could reply, a second scream, louder and more piercing, smote upon the ear, and was followed by a succession of unearthly yells.

'Quick, Sambo ! Turn to the left. There is some foul play going on down this road. Quick ! or we may be too late to prevent a tragedy.'

But Sambo's white teeth chattered, all the more because the pony obstinately refused to obey the rein — willing to bolt down the road home, but determined not to turn to the left for either man or master. As he snorted, reared, and plunged, threatening the slight vehicle with destruction, and the shrieks still continued, the doctor and his companion leapt out, and ran at full speed down the road, athwart which sparsely set palmetto- or cocoanut-trees cast spectral shadows.

A faint sea-breeze met them, laden with the mingled perfumes of fruit and flower, but with it came more hideously the strange discordant noise. Then two or three wild dogs darted past them, howling as they went. Then, with garments flying loose and eyeballs glaring, a

negro woman, blind with terror, ran against the doctor. A man, little less excited, was close at her heels.

'Hallo! what is the meaning of this outcry?' demanded the doctor, grasping the man by the arm, under the impression the negress was escaping from ill-usage.

The man—who proved to be the undertaker's foreman—could only gasp between his chattering teeth,

'Dre'ful! Dre'ful, doctor; dre'ful!'

The woman—a seamstress whom the foreman was gallantly escorting home—had continued her flight.

'You black scoundrel, what have you been doing?' cried the doctor, giving him a shake.

The man's protest was drowned by a fresh outbreak of the same appalling cries.

Dr. Hawley, exclaiming, 'Again! What is that?' released his arm, convinced that he at least was not the peacebreaker.

'O, doctor, dre'ful down dere! Dead man's fight.'

'Pish!' 'Rubbish!' from the doctor and his friend; and they rushed forward, drawing reluctant Cicero back with them.

But they too stood aghast as they approached the mausoleum. The noise—a demoniac compound of blows, groans, shrieks, and howls—evidently issued from the bricked-up sepulchre!

It seemed, indeed, as though a desperate combat raged within the closed-up tomb; and the blood of the spectators curdled as they listened.

They were not the only auditors. A neighbouring planter and a sturdy sea-captain on their way inland had been arrested on their journey likewise, and seemed rooted to the spot with a mysterious dread.

Could any one imagine a scene more terrible! The mausoleum, worn with age and weather, over-

grown with moss and lichens, sentinelled by sandbox-trees and blighted cocoa-palms, whose shroud-like drapery of creepers gave them the aspect of ghosts of dead trees keeping watch for ghosts of dead men; and scared by the unearthly din, owls and monkeys screeched and chattered, to make if possible a greater pandemonium.

'I have seen the ocean in its fury, heard the winds break loose, and the artillery of heaven rattle, but never did I hear anything so terrific as this. It makes my very flesh creep,' said the captain, addressing Dr. Hawley. 'Can you, sir, offer any solution of this mystery?'

What Dr. Hawley might have said was interrupted by a final burst of triumphant yells, followed by a peal of still more discordant laughter, which died away in feeble cachinnations, till silence scarcely less awful fell on all around.

A harmless snake then uncoiled itself on the mausoleum steps and dragged itself across the road, a pair of green lizards crawled over the dome of the mausoleum to bask in the moonlight; and the unaccountable noises having ceased entirely, the party drawn together so singularly moved away in a body.

As a natural sequence, conversation turned on the place they had just quitted, Archibald Corbyn's funeral, and that of Laura Walcot; and so much was Captain Hudson interested, that when they shook hands and separated at the fork of the roads, he had promised to call on Dr. Hawley at his house near Kissing Bridge before sailing for England.

Seven persons (including Sambo) went their several ways surcharged with the story of a horrible mystery.

What wonder that the succeeding midnight brought a crowd to the spot, to test, verify, or ridicule, as might be? Notwithstanding the

previous shock to his nerves, Dr. Hawley made one. With him was Stephen Walcot, much concerned by this commotion over his sister's grave; and on the extreme verge of the assembly they saw a group of old Corbyn servants huddled together like a flock of timid sheep, with Cuffy and aunt Dinah at their head.

The doctor had lost no time in making Mr. Walcot acquainted with his nocturnal experience. Matthias only curled his lip, shrugged his shoulders, and said, 'Were I you, doctor, I would not repeat this nonsense. Your patients will not care to consult a medico who takes too much wine.' He had spoken to the sons. William laughed outright. Steve, subdued by his sister's loss, gave their informant a more respectful hearing, and, in spite of his brother's banter, volunteered to watch the tomb that night with the doctor, little surmising how many would share that watch.

Twelve by Dr. Hawley's repeater! The silent expectant crowd shrank back with affright as, without one moment's premonition, the air was rent with a volley of shrieks and yells, which wakened the echoes of the hills, and a chorus from owls and monkeys drove the raccoon from his bed, the pigeons from their nests, and sent batwings from the shadows to flutter in the moonlight.

For one whole hour the noises were unceasing. If superstition drew the crowd together, fear dispersed it. Only the most daring of the auditors remained, and amongst these were Cuffy and Dinah, who stood apart with hands upraised, as if invoking unseen protection.

Bearing Cuffy's adjuration and previsions in mind, Dr. Hawley—well acquainted with negro subtlety, and anxious to find a natural solution for the phenomena—drew the centenarian apart, and, with

Stephen by his side, subjected him to a fire of cross-questions.

'Know nuffink 'bout it, doctor; 'cept Massa Corbyn not rest. Him angry; all him dead family angry,' was all they could elicit.

Yet, in spite of his genuine trepidation—for every nerve seemed to quiver—there appeared some reservation, of which the doctor took a mental note for question at a fitter time.

Mrs. Walcot was frantic. Sorrow for her daughter's loss was reduplicated by this scandal over her very grave. Mr. Walcot and William repudiated all notion of the supernatural, and ascribed the strange phenomena to a plot between Cuffy and his colleagues. Stringent orders were left with the overseers that no slave should quit the plantation after sundown, or approach within a given distance of the mausoleum, under penalty of a flogging.

But that did not quell the nocturnal riot. Matthias brought his own eyes and ears to the test, had the place examined by day, placed a cordon of military around, but all to no purpose.

For five nights the supernatural warfare continued. Trafalgar-square and the Bridgetown ice-house were thronged with thirsty gossips, and Barbadoes throbbed with superstitious fear to its very finger-tips.

Then it ceased. The excitement gradually died out, business resumed its sway, the Walcots were condoled with, and the dead reposed in peace.

Still superstition held the haunted mausoleum in dread; and urgent must be the business and hardy must be the man that should travel that road by night.

Even over the Corbyn mansion crept a sort of eerie atmosphere. There was less laughter, and more whispering in secret corners. Every figure in mourning robes seemed to cast a shadow of death on the

hearth. A cloud deeper than that of grief rested on the brows of Matthias and his wife ; and the infection spread to the white tenantry on the estate.

IV. OBEAH !

A FORTNIGHT later Dr. Hawley rode out to the Hall. It was purely a friendly visit, so he said ; but ere he went away he asked his host how he was progressing in his search for a legitimate heir, adding that a friend of his, a Captain Hudson, of the barque *Adelaide*, would readily undertake any commission in furtherance of that end in the mother country.

Mrs. Walcot bridled up, and Matthias, reddening, answered stiffly, ‘Thank you, doctor, but I can manage my own business without the intervention of strangers. I need no reminder of my duty. A sea captain is scarcely the person to institute inquiries of this nature.’

‘Perhaps not,’ assented the doctor dryly, with a peculiar smile, as he took his departure, much like one who has but done half his errand.

Had their voices wafted to Cuffy through the open casement, that he should quit the jasmine he was pruning by the portico to hurry to the avenue ? Whether or not, he stopped the pony under shadow of the large trees, and whispered earnestly and mysteriously :

‘Dr. Hawley, you good man ; you lub ole massa. Him spirit angry ; all de Corbyn spirits angry. Last night Dinah dream—dream of Massa Charlie. He wet an’ white upon the steps ; he ask to come in, and Massa Walcot shut the door—an Death come in instead ! Doctor, dere be nudder Corbyn *somewhere*, an Massa Walcot no try to find him ; an’ spirits *berry* angry. Cuffy work Obeah charm to-night, to keep de evil

doom from de black boys and girls dat lub ole Massa Corbyn !

‘I would advise you to have nothing to do with Obeah, Cuffy. It may breed ill-feeling and do mischief,’ said the doctor as Cuffy loosened his hold of the reins, and Sambo cracked his whip.

In Corbyn Hall Wood, remote from the Hall itself, close by a mountain streamlet which ran down to join the river, was a bubbling boiling spring. The spot was lonely and sequestered, shadowed by the palmetto and the manchineel. Gourds and squashes trailed along the ground and hid the iguana, the green lizard, and the spotted toad. No pine-apple or banana grew beside it ; no seaside grape spread its branches low to the ground, hanging thick and ruddy clusters under every branch, glossy with leaves of green ; but all that was dark or rank grew there.

It was a dismal spot. Yet hither dusky forms came stealthily in the middle of the night to watch and share with Cuffy in the dread rites of Obeah incantation. To his fellows he was known as a Mandingo priest, and the hold he had on their superstitious souls was strong and terrible. His hut was near at hand, and in this weird corner of the plantation had he been wont to concoct healing balms, philtres, and the yet more potent Obeah, whose spell, wrought in secret, was supposed to work in secret, and set human skill and precaution at defiance.

Dinah was there—a fitting priestess of these mysteries—and Dan and Scipio, and Chloe and Cassy, with others whose names are unrecorded.

There was a fissure in the ground close to the boiling spring. To this Cuffy applied a light, and instantly a jet of flame shot up, and the poor dupes bowed down to the fire-spirit. From a hollow tree

was produced an iron pot. Half filling this from the boiling spring, it was suspended on a triangle of sticks over the natural naphtha flame, and the weird rites began.

There was a low monotonous chant in a strange tongue, a dance around the seething pot, which in the lurid light was half demoniac ; and Cuffy, swaying to and fro, muttered words unknown even to his confederates, as one by one he threw into the pot snake-wood from the trumpet-tree, sap from the deadly manchineel, a snake cucumber, the poisonous sandbox leaves and rings, a living lizard and a toad, a turtle's egg, the root of the cat's-blood plant, a bat, a young owlet, a dead man's hair, pernicious scum from Long Pond, and other venomous ingredients with and without a name.

It was a horrible compound—a deadly poison ; and as it bubbled in the pot, white teeth and eyes gleamed out from midnight faces, hideous from their own imaginings.

The charm wrought out, the mixture poured into a calabash bottle and closely stopped, the refuse buried in the ground, the pot restored to the hollow tree, the magic flame extinguished with wet sand, Cuffy dismissed his impish brood to their huts, and bore away his revolting decoction, to be buried the ensuing night under the threshold of the Hall. The doom hanging over Corbyn would then fall upon the fated mortals who should step across it first ; and thus, Obeah satisfied, his followers would be protected.

Be sure there were early risers among the initiated, and sharp eyes to watch the threshold under ban, and warn off unwary foot-steps.

Mr. William Walcot was the first to leave the house ; but months went by, and still he came and went healthily, and haughtily, in

spite of Obeah ; and he was more frequently at the Hall than either his father or Stephen liked, the Folly being his home proper. The father considered that Will interfered too much on the plantation, to the neglect and detriment of his shipping agency ; while Steve, aware of the comparative proximity of the Hall to the Parsonage, regarded him as a dangerous rival.

The fact was that the elder of the twain had determined most fraternally to 'cut his brother out' of the favour of Miss Wolferstone, if the clergyman's rich and lovely ward had any leaning in that direction, and altogether comported himself as if he were his father's natural and certain successor on the estate.

But Mrs. Walcot sickened : an inexplicable disease, which caused her lower limbs to swell painfully, marred her enjoyment, and made her splendid mansion little better than a prison, although stately Augusta Wolferstone and lively Mary Fulton came like sunbeams now and again to brighten it up. Then Matthias grew aguish and shivery. Finally Steve, diverging from the wood-path on his way from the parsonage one Sunday at the hour when sun and moon looked each other in the face, fell over a fern-covered boulder and broke his leg.

Cuffy and Scipio, out after dark on some occult errand, directed by his groans, found him lying amidst the rank vegetation, just over the spot where the Obeah refuse lay buried. 'A coincidence,' the old man observed to his companion ; with the addendum, 'Sorry Massa Steve hurt: him best cane of bundle.'

Cuffy moreover showed his sincerity by binding cooling herbs on the broken limb whilst Scipio ran for a litter, and by setting the said limb skilfully as a surgeon,

long before Dr. Hawley could be found.

Superstition regarded these untoward circumstances as so many visitations of warning or admonition. Indeed, so freely did Barbadian society discuss the Walcot succession to the Corbyn property by the light of Walcot ill-luck, that Matthias found his bed of roses invaded by gnats stinging worse than mosquitoes, to say nothing of the private thorns planted by conscience under the rose-leaves.

From the morning when Dr. Hawley entered his office like a spirit of evil, to tell how his dead child's rest was disturbed, his own rest had been disturbed by nightmare memories of Archibald's death-bed. The dying man had trusted him. He had ill-deserved that trust. He had not meant to defraud the heir, if there was one; he had only been lukewarm in his efforts to find him. But was there one? He thought not; and so advertising was only waste of good money. Besides, it might tempt some knave to worry him with fictitious claims. However, some day he would send Will or Steve to England to make inquiries; and there was time enough.

And so he tried to salve the conscience that would not be salved; especially as Dr. Hawley now and then gave it an unexpected prick, and Cuffy and Dinah looked unutterable thorns.

The rainy season had almost passed. Steve's leg was nearly well; he could move about with the help of crutches; and Scipio had more than once driven him, very gently, over to the parsonage, to be especially petted, both by Miss Wolferstone and Mary Fulton, the English parson's English daughter.

It was Will's turn to be jealous. He could not see why a broken leg and a pale face should be so devilish attractive to a woman. They

didn't attract him! It went to his heart to see Augusta Wolferstone place the easiest cane-chair in the verandah ready for his brother, and adjust the softest cushions to his special need. He was exasperated, too, that business should keep him so much at the wharf, and an accident clear the way for Steve to woo the girl in his absence.

So persistent were his grumblings that Mr. Walcot, for the sake of peace, went back to his old office to lighten Will's labour and give him an occasional holiday. On one of these days, William, who slept chiefly at the Folly during the wet season, rode from Bridgetown to the parsonage, calling in to see his mother on his way. He there learned that Stephen, taking advantage of a fine day, had gone before him, and was then at St. Andrew's parsonage.

This roused his domineering temper; and with scarcely a civil word to his ailing and querulous mother, and a very uncivil cut with his riding-whip to the creole groom who held his horse, he set off neck-or-nothing, resolved to try whether he or Steve had the best of it before the day was out. So vicious was he in his brotherly love that he cut at his horse as if it had been Stephen's self, and dismounted in front of the parsonage, little improved by seeing Steve on a couch under the verandah holding a skein of purse-twist for Augusta, whilst Mary read aloud to both.

His first remark was a sneer at his disabled brother's womanish occupation, his next a rude retort to Augusta's defence of Stephen. A bad beginning this; and his consciousness that it was bad only paved the way for further discomfiture.

Later in the day, he demanded, rather than solicited, a *tête-à-tête* conversation with Miss Wolfer-

stone, and with little delicacy and less tact urged his suit as one whose claims were imperial—urged it, too, as Steve's elder brother, and heir to the Corbyn estate.

Whatever claim he might have had on the young lady's regard he lost in that interview. His rudeness and unbrotherly feeling were so palpable, she felt impelled to resent both.

'I have no desire, sir, to marry the heir to the Corbyn or any other estate; but I do choose to marry a gentleman. I must therefore decline the honour of your alliance;' and she swept from the library as she spoke, without giving him a chance for another syllable.

Without a word of adieu to the ladies he darted from the house, almost too impatient to wait for the saddling of his horse; certainly too much irritated to accept the genial invitation of Mr. Fulton to remain the night, even though the weather had changed, and the rain was the rain of the tropics.

A sane man would have remembered that previous rains had flooded lowlands, had swelled mountain runnels to rivers, and rivers to torrents, and, so remembering, have taken the safer high-road by which he came, however circuitous.

But he, blinded by passion, disappointment, and jealousy (had he not left his silken brother behind him?), dashed homewards the near way, across Church River and through the wood.

Over the bridge he went safely enough; but when he reached the Corbyn rivulet, fed from Haggat's spring, he found his way stopped by a formidable stream rushing tumultuously on towards Long Pond. In no mood to hesitate, he madly urged his reluctant animal to attempt the perilous crossing.

He must have either missed the ford, or the horse lost its footing, and been carried down by the force

of the water. His body was found the following day at the entrance to Long Pond, blue, swollen, and swathed in a shroud of the poisonous green scum of the pond.

V. ON THE WINGS OF THE WIND.

ONCE more orders were given to open the Corbyn receptacle for the dead.

The preparatory gun was fired into the vault; the brickwork was removed; the door opened for ventilation, then for preparation; and lo, the place was strewn with coffins and wrecks of coffins, skeletons and fragments of skeletons; and old Archibald's black coffin lay across Laura Walcot's white one, which was itself dinged and battered as if with heavy blows.

Scared out of his senses, Dan ran, as the crow flies, with his strange tale to the mourners at the Hall.

Incredulity faded before the fact. Matthias was staggered and terror-stricken. The air was sultry even for sultry Barbadoes, and that left no time for fresh arrangements. The solemn ceremonial *must* proceed.

The hearse had reached the mausoleum before the disordered coffins could be replaced, or the *débris* collected and cleared into a vacant niche.

Then, with many misgivings and intensified anguish, Matthias saw the white coffin of the unmarried young man deposited by the side of his sister's, and the creaking door closed upon both.

And as he and Steve, now his only son, were driven back to the Hall, he saw how great a horror had fallen on the funeral guests one and all.

Nor did the horror end there.

Again scuffling, wild yells, and shrieks made darkness terrible for five successive midnights; and then the haunted mausoleum sank to silence like a common grave.

And now there was a lull. The calamitous storms of fate and the season seemed alike to have spent their fury. The earth was green, the sky was bright, and Matthias steadfastly put the past behind him, refusing to look back. Like Pharaoh of old, he hardened his heart, unwilling to 'let go' his hold of Corbyn.

Not so Stephen. His bumptious front lowered when his sister was stricken down in the very midst of festivity. Old Cuffy's prophetic warnings had not fallen on deaf ears. He appealed to his father to remove the remains of sister and brother from the Corbyn mausoleum, and to take prompt steps to find a living heir, if such existed. Matthias was obstinate; so was he, and a *little* more conscientious.

He conferred with Dr. Hawley. Judge his surprise to find that the Captain Hudson, whose services his father had rejected with so much asperity, had eight years before picked up at sea a woman lashed to a spar, who supposed herself the sole survivor of the Mermaid, in which husband and son had both gone down. The Mermaid's destination had been Barbadoes, and the woman's name was *Corbyn*. Shortly after happening to hail a passing schooner, the Boyne from Cork to Bristol, he transferred the rescued lady to that vessel, his own barque being outward bound.

'And, my young friend, as you appear anxious to see justice done,' added the doctor, 'I may tell you I have already guaranteed Captain Hudson his expenses in the prosecution of a search for that lady.'

A hearty hand-shake at parting sealed a cordial agreement between the twain, and Steve set off for the parsonage with a lighter heart than had been his for many a day.

The season rounded, bringing with it a prospect of Steve's marriage with Miss Wolferstone when their term of mourning expired.

Long before that, fresh sables were called for.

Mrs. Walcot's unaccountable disease, aggravated by grief and her exclusion from society, had terminated fatally.

An altercation again arose between father and son respecting the place of sepulture. It ended in orders for the opening of the mausoleum under Mr. Walcot's own eye.

The sight he beheld was enough to chill his blood; but it never turned him from his purpose. Scientific men discussing the phenomena had talked of gaseous forces; but he spoke only of conspiracy amongst his black slaves to bend his will to theirs.

Again the battered and broken coffins were replaced, and the fragments hid out of sight; again he laid his dead among the Corbyn dead.

Again the Corbyn dead arose at midnight to protest against intrusion; again the night was hideous with discordant cries; and, as if the free spirits of the air were leagued with the captives in that tomb, the rising wind howled and shrieked in unison.

Fiery Barbadoes could not remember more oppressive weather. The louring clouds, the stifling heat, the sultry heavy atmosphere had boded tempest, and at midnight came down the rain in sheets driven by a breeze from the north-east which grew and strengthened to a tremendous gale. Then there was a treacherous calm, and then suddenly the winds ran riot; and from three to five o'clock mad hurricane swept the island from end to end, flashing lightnings forth to trace destruction by.

Daylight broke on August 11th, 1831, upon ruin and desolation. Houses and huts were blown down, fields laid waste, trees uprooted, valleys inundated. Wreck strewed

the coast. The Government House was unroofed, the Custom House blown down, churches were damaged ; the verdant paradise was a wilderness.

Amidst the general wreck, Corbyn had not escaped ; yet the Hall itself stood firm, though the windmill sails and cap were torn to shivers. But the Walcot House at the Folly had disappeared, and with it much valuable property.

The coast had its black chronicles. A ship had been driven on the rocks in Long Bay, and only one of her crew was washed ashore. He was the second mate, a fine young man with light wavy hair, straight nose, ample forehead, and blue eyes. He had been borne on the crest of a wave, and cast on a rock with just strength left to scramble a few yards beyond the range of the swooping billows, and to thank God for his miraculous preservation.

He was bruised, ragged, and destitute ; yet in the universal ruin his wants were all but disregarded. A compassionate negress gave him a draught of rum and a piece of corn-cake, but her own hut was dismantled, and shelter was far to seek.

On all sides he saw desolation and trouble. Dispirited, he turned to the highway, in hopes of gaining a shelter before nightfall. Some unseen hand led him in his helpless friendlessness to take the road William Walcot had traversed in his frenzy. Now, as then, the little stream was swollen to a great one ; but the sailor was a good swimmer, and having daylight to his task, crossed in safety where the other lost his life. The path through Corbyn Wood was blocked in places by fallen trees, which made his progress slow and perilous. There was no lack of scattered cocoa-nuts and other fruit to stay his hunger, but night fell as he slept the sleep of exhaustion on an upturned tree-trunk.

He was awakened by loud shrieks.

Following the sound, he emerged from the plantation on to the open road, and soon reached a low windowless building, across which a large sandbox-tree had fallen. As he neared it the shrieks were overpowered by loud hurrahs, which somehow made his chilled blood tingle with a sensation akin to a shudder.

People like himself, cast adrift by the hurricane, were on the else-avoided road. In answer to his questions, he was told that the nearest habitation was Corbyn Hall, and that low domed edifice, the haunted mausoleum of the Corbyns.

'Corbyn?' echoed the sailor ; 'did you say Corbyn? My name is Corbyn, and I have an uncle Corbyn living in Barbadoes !'

'Was your uncle's name Archibald?' asked a passing gentleman on horseback.

'Yes ; and my name is Archibald. My father's name was Charles.'

'Is not your father living ?'

'Alas, no. He was drowned in the wreck of the Mermaid, on his way to Barbadoes, when I was only twelve years old.'

'H'm ! And where were you at the time, young man ?'

'Shipwrecked too, sir, and my mother also. I clung to a hencoop, and was picked up half-dead by the captain of the Boyne.'

'And your mother ?'

'She too was mercifully saved, as I have been this day ; but as Providence willed it, the captain who had picked her up sent her aboard to us, his own vessel being bound on a long voyage ; and we had reason to be thankful for it, or we might never have met again in this world. But'—impulsively—'are you my uncle, sir ? You ask so many questions.'

'No ; Archibald Corbyn has lain for eighteen months in yonder tomb. But I knew him well. I see you are in a sad plight, and in no con-

dition to walk a long distance ; so I recommend you to present yourself at Corbyn Hall—no matter the hour at this awful crisis. I do not suppose you will be a very welcome visitor to Mr. Walcot. Executors seldom like to disgorge ; and if you can prove your identity as old Archibald's nephew, you are heir to this estate, and my gentleman will have to turn out. In any case, should he treat you as an impostor—as is not unlikely—any of the old negroes will give you food and shelter, if they have it. Your name will insure that.'

'I thank you, sir,' was all that Archie in his weakness and bewildering whirl of emotions could utter, as he bowed and turned as directed towards Corbyn Hall.

'Stay!' cried the stranger, wheeling his horse round. 'I am a clergyman and a magistrate—the Rev. John Fulton, of St. Andrew's. There is my card. Show it. Should Mr. Walcot reject you, call upon me to-morrow ; or upon Dr. Hawley of Kissing Bridge, Bridgetown. We will see you are not wronged. My business is urgent, or I would accompany you now.'

Bareheaded, barefooted, ragged, sea-stained, weary, footsore, and bleeding from sharp stones and sharper thorns, the famished shipwrecked heir dragged himself slowly to Corbyn Hall, to sink exhausted on the very threshold.

There he was found by ever-wakeful Dinah, whose screams, 'A ghost, a ghost!' roused the whole tribe of woolly-heads from the mats on which they slept—and blown-down huts had filled house and piazza to overflowing.

'Massa Charlie's ghost ?' from a chorus of tongues reached the chamber where Matthias lay shivering with ague. Watchful Stephen leaned over the balcony to seek the reason of the uproar.

Quick as thought he was in their

midst, supporting the fainting youth in his strong arms. Little need to ask his name : the likeness to a picture in the house told it without voice.

Archie Corbyn was carried within ; and while Scipio was despatched post-haste for Dr. Hawley, he was restored, refreshed, and tended with an assiduity no Walcot had ever been able to command. The previous day's hurricane had not created a greater commotion than the finding of the fainting sailor it had blown amongst them.

Matthias Walcot, however, was not disposed to receive Archie Corbyn on the strength of a likeness and his own *ipse dixit*. He put upon him the onus of proof, in the secret hope (hardly confessed to himself) that difficulties might arise and his own position continue intact. At all events he would remain master in the interim ; and—but that he feared a rising amongst his slaves, headed by his own son—so much were his principles demoralised that, in the face of conviction, he would have compelled Archie Corbyn to seek other quarters until his rights were indisputably established.

Steve stood by the heir gallantly, though his coming did close the prospect of succession to a fine domain. So did Dr. Hawley and the Rev. John Fulton, his first adviser. Cuffy and Dinah worshipped him. But he had no warmer champions than Mary Fulton and Augusta Wolferstone, with whom, no doubt, it was more a matter of feeling than of legal right.

Dr. Hawley and Steve had opened their purses to him, and once provided with means he dressed and looked the gentleman he was.

Archie's first care had been to write to his mother, begging her to leave England for Barbadoes without loss of time, armed with all necessary credentials.

Scarcely three weeks after the despatch of this letter, Dr. Hawley sought Stephen Walcot at the wharf.

In less than an hour Sambo was driving a party of four in the doctor's phaeton as fast as the unprepared roads would permit.

They alighted at Corbyn Hall.

Archie Corbyn was at the parsonage.

Steve was always glad of an excuse for a visit there. Resuming his seat, he was whirled thither, carried off Archie without a word of explanation, and left the young ladies excited and curious.

In the drawing-room of Corbyn Hall Archie found, to his joy and amazement, his mother. With her was Captain Hudson, to whom he was indebted for her appearance on the scene before his own missive was half-way over the ocean. The sea-captain had proved too good a seeker for Matthias Walcot, who sat there nervous and fidgety, with one arm resting on a side-table, on which he kept up a spasmodic tattoo with his long finger-nails.

What further credentials were wanted than certificates of birth and marriage, and magisterial attestations, and Captain Hudson's testimony?

Corbyn Hall was once more in the hands of a Corbyn, and from Cuffy the news spread like an electric flame.

Archie Corbyn was magnanimous. Setting Stephen's heartiness against his father's tardiness (he called it by no worse name), he offered both a home until their own house at the Folly could be rebuilt; and he did not call on his executor to refund the moneys so lavishly expended out of the Corbyn coffers.

Yet Matthias had another bitter draught to swallow before he returned to his shipping-agency and to the Folly.

The midnight outcry at the mausoleum had never ceased since Mrs. Walcot was laid therein. The hurricane had torn away the newly-plastered brickwork, and now it sounded as if heavy hands were beating the door down.

Dinah took care that Mrs. Corbyn should not remain uninformed; and ancient Cuffy gave to Archie his version of the mystery with fervid impressiveness.

'It Cuffy's 'pinion, massa, dat Massa Arch'bald nebber rest till dem Walcots be cleared out. Him berry proud ob him pure white blood, an' dem Walcots hab got berry mixed blood under dere white skins.'

Archie took counsel with his friends, Steve among the rest. The result was the removal of the Walcot coffins to a vault in St. Andrew's churchyard. They were found, strange to relate, wedged together close to the door by the coffins of Archibald and Jamie Corbyn.

Quiet fell on the mausoleum after that—a quiet in nowise disturbed when, after the lapse of some three or four years, the elder Mrs. Corbyn was placed there reverently by her son.

In saying the elder Mrs. Corbyn, it must be understood that when, proud of her generous lover, Augusta Wolferstone gave herself and her money to Steve Walcot, Archie Corbyn took to wife without a fortune the fair English girl, Mary Fulton, whose heart he had won as a poor shipwrecked sailor before it was proved that old Archibald was not the last of the Corbyns.

Cuffy and Dinah lived to see slavery abolished in the West Indies, and to watch the toddling feet of more than one young Corbyn, into whose undeveloped minds they did their best to infuse the old Corbyn pride of race and pure blood.

SPLIT WATERS

SHE was a maiden free and fair,
Her eyes as black as sloe;
Like ruddy gold was all her hair,
And all her neck was snow.

Warm were her lover's words and bold,
Once when his love was new ;
But sudden wax'd they faint and cold,
His love it pass'd like dew.

Then waned that maid by morn and noon,
While all alone she wept,
Till in the old gray church too soon
She in her coffin slept.

He never heard her last farewell,
And none was there to grieve,
Save little birds which sang her knell,
When she this world did leave.

Was it chance her faithless lover led
That night by the old church door ?
How came he that stone floor to tread
He ne'er had trod before ?

The bat flew round his silent road,
The owl his vigil kept,
With clear fix'd eyes the clammy toad
From moss-grown fountain leapt.

Dogs bark'd, all twinkling stars were fled,
The busy spindle turn'd,
Low sunk on earth the moon gleam'd red
As blood, all heaven burn'd.

Athwart thick shadows one pale ray
The blood-red moon let fall,
Still on the dead girl's face it lay,
Still on her snowy pall.

Strange holy horror held him round,
A cold and listening air,
Naught but his lingering footfall's sound
Broke the weird silence there.

He thought of all,—the sweet May-queen,
Their tryst, his broken vow ;
He thought of all she once had been,
And saw—what she was now.

When the first cock the morning told
She in her coffin lay ;
And one beside her, stark and cold,
Saw not the dawn of day.

He saw, and sought to close his eyes,
Yet could not choose but see :
Sudden the dead essay'd to rise,
Eftsoons he turn'd to flee.

Before him frown'd the fretted door ;
How fain would he have fled !
One step he moved, but moved no more,
His feet seem'd made of lead.

Twice rose the ghastly-sheeted shape,
And slowly sank again ;
With bristling hair and mouth agape
He tried to pray—in vain !

A guilty midnight terror froze
With death-like frost his blood ;
And then once more the spectre rose,
And stalk'd to where he stood.

'Forgive me ! for thy bitter woe
I now repent full sore ;
I would, ay me ! all else forego,
Thy fair fame to restore !'

It answer'd not, but led the way,
The cold hand clasp'd his own,
To where pure holy water lay,
Dark in the hollow stone.

'Empty the font.' The waters chill
Plash'd on the chancel floor.
'Now grasp the flowing stream, and fill
That basin as before !'

As to collect the fleeting wave
Thine efforts all are vain,
So naught on thy side of the grave
Can lost renown regain.

Ah, never since that heavy hour
Was happiness for me,
In sight of bloom or budding flower,
In song of bird or bee.

My fame was gone for aye. I speak
Waste words, alas, the while.—
It stopp'd, for, lo, a light gray streak
Glimmer'd across the aisle.

JAMES MEW.